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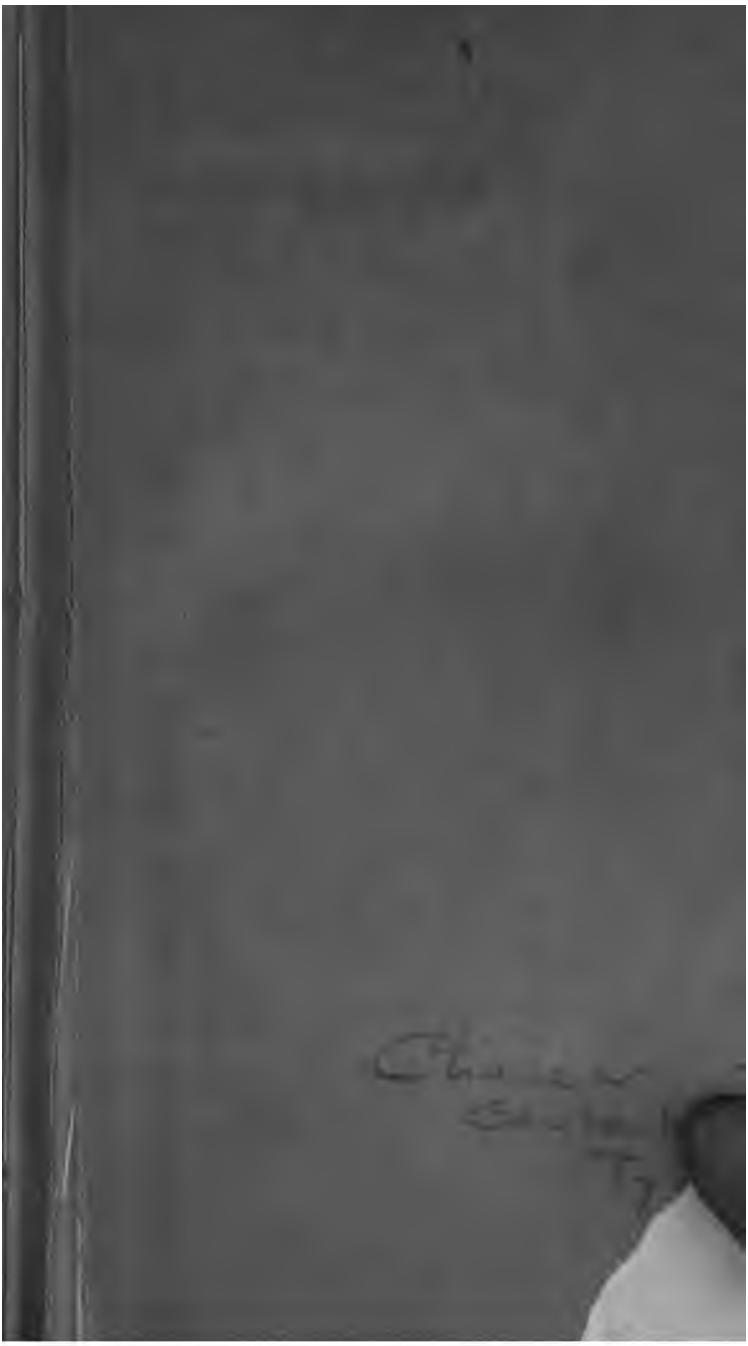

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CHAUCER'S
CANTERBURY TALES.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

THE CANTERBURY TALES OF CHAUCER;

WITH AN ESSAY ON HIS LANGUAGE AND VERSIFICATION, AN INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE, NOTES, AND A GLOSSARY BY THO. TYRWHITT, ESQ.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
WILLIAM PICKERING.
1830.

LENOX LIBRARY
NEW YORK

WHITTINGHAM, TOOKS COURT,
CHANCERY LANE.

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THE

CANTERBURY TALES.

THE DOCTOURES PROLOGUE.

Ye, let that passen, quod oure Hoste, as now.
Sire Doctour of Physike, I prey you,
Tell us a tale of som honest matere.
It shal be don, if that ye wol it here,
Said this doctour, and his tale began anon.
Now, good men, quod he, herkeneth everich on.

THE DOCTOURES TALE.

Ther was, as telleth Titus Livius,
A knight, that cleped was Virginius,
Fulfilled of honour and worthinesse,
And strong of frendes, and of gret richesse.
This knight a doughter hadde by his wif.
No children had he mo in all his lif.
Faire was this maid in excellent beautee
Aboven every wight that man may see:
For nature hath with soveraine diligence
Yformed hire in so gret excellence,

As though she wolde sayn, lo, I nature,
Thus can I forme and peint a creature,
Whan that me list; who can me contrefete?
Pigmalion? not, though he ay forge and bete,
Or grave, or peinte: for I dare wel sain,
Apelles, Xeuxis, shulden werche in vain,
Other to grave, or peinte, or forge, or bete,
If they presumed me to contrefete.
For he that is the former principal,
Hath maked me his vicaire general
To forme and peinten erthly creatures
Right as me list, and eche thing in my cure is
Under the mone, that may wane and waxe.
And for my werk right nothing wol I axe;
My lord and I ben ful of on accord.
I made hire to the worship of my lord;
So do I all min other creatures,
What colour that they han, or what figures.
Thus semeth me that nature wolde say.
  This maid of age twelf yere was and tway,
In which that nature hadde swiche delit.
For right as she can peint a lily whit
And red a rose, right with swiche peinture
She peinted hath this noble creature
Er she was borne, upon hire limmes free,
Wheras by right swiche colours shulden be:

And Phebus died hath hire tresses grete,
Like to the stremes of his burned hete.
And if that excellent were hire beautee,
A thousand fold more vertuous was she.
In hire ne lacked no condition,
That is to preise, as by discretion.
As wel in gost as body, chast was she:
For which she floured in virginitee,
With all humilitee and abstinence,
With all attemperance and patience,
With mesure eke, of bering and array.
Discrete she was in answering alway,
Though she were wise as Pallas, dare I sain,
Hire facounde eke ful womanly and plain,
No contrefeted termes hadde she
To semen wise; but after hire degree
She spake, and all hire wordes more and lesse
Souning in vertue and in gentillesse.
Shamefast she was in maidens shamefastnesse,
Constant in herte, and ever in besinesse
To drive hire out of idel slogardie:
Bacchus had of hire mouth right no maistrie.
For wine and youthe don Venus encrese,
As men in fire wol casten oile and grese.
And of hire owen vertue unconstreined,
She hath hireself ful often sike yfeined,

For that she wolde fleen the compagnie,
Wher likely was to treten of folie,
As is at festes, at revels, and at dances,
That ben occasions of daliances.
Swiche thinges maken children for to be
To sone ripe and bold, as men may see,
Which is ful perillous, and hath ben yore;
For al to sone may she lernen lore
Of boldnesse, whan she woxen is a wif.
And ye maistresses in your olde lif,
That lordes doughters han in governance,
Ne taketh of my wordes displesance:
Thinketh that ye ben set in governinges
Of lordes doughters, only for two thinges
Other for ye han kept your honestee,
Or elles for ye han fallen in freeltee,
And knowen wel ynough the olde dance,
And han forsaken fully swiche meschance
For evermo: therfore for Cristes sake
To teche hem vertue loke that ye ne slake.
A theef of venison, that hath forlaft
His likerousnesse, and all his olde craft,
Can kepe a forest best of any man:
Now kepeth hem wel, for if ye wol ye can.
Loke wel, that ye unto no vice assent,
Lest ye be damned for your wikke entent,

For who so doth, a traytour is certain: 12023
And taketh kepe of that I shal you sain;
Of alle treson soveraine pestilence
Is, whan a wight betrayeth innocence.
Ye fathers, and ye mothers eke also,
Though ye han children, be it on or mo,
Your is the charge of all hir surveance,
While that they ben under your governance.
Beth ware, that by ensample of your living, 12031
Or by your negligence in chastising,
That they ne perish: for I dare wel saye,
If that they don, ye shul it dere abeye.
Under a shepherd soft and negligent,
The wolf hath many a shepe and lamb to-rent.
Sufficeth this ensample now as here,
For I mote turne agen to my matere.
This maid, of which I tell my tale expresse, 12039
She kept hireself, hire neded no maistresse;
For in hire living maidens mighten rede,
As in a book, every good word and dede,
That longeth to a maiden vertuous:
She was so prudent and so bounteous.
For which the fame out sprong on every side
Both of hire beautee and hire bountee wide:
That thurgh the lond they preised hire ech one,
That loved vertue, sauf envie alone, 12048

That sory is of other mannes wele,
And glad is of his sorwe and his unhele.
The doctour maketh this descriptioun.
This maiden on a day went in the toun
Toward a temple, with hire mother dere,
As is of yonge maidens the manere.
Now was ther than a justice in that toun,
That governour was of that regioun:
And so befell, this juge his eyen cast
Upon this maid, avising hire ful fast,
As she came forth by ther this juge stood:
Anon his herte changed and his mood,
So was he caught with beautee of this maid,
And to himself ful prively he said,
This maiden shal be min for any man.
Anon the fend into his herte ran,
And taught him sodenly, that he by sleight
This maiden to his purpos winnen might.
For certes, by no force, ne by no mede,
Him thought he was not able for to spede;
For she was strong of frendes, and eke she
Confermed was in swiche soveraine bountee,
That wel he wist he might hire never winne,
As for to make hire with hire body sinne.
For which with gret deliberatioun
He sent after a cherl was in the toun,

The which he knew for sotil and for bold.
This juge unto this cherl his tale hath told
In secree wise, and made him to ensure,
He shulde tell it to no creature,
And if he did, he shulde lese his hede.
And whan assented was this cursed rede,
Glad was the juge, and maked him gret chere,
And yaf him yeftes precious and dere.
Whan shapen was all hir conspiracie
Fro point to point, how that his lecherie
Parformed shulde be ful sotilly,
As ye shul here it after openly,
Home goth this cherl, that highte Claudius.
This false juge, that highte Appius,
(So was his name, for it is no fable,
But knowen for an historial thing notable;
The sentence of it soth is out of doute)
This false juge goth now fast aboute
To hasten his delit all that he may.
And so befell, sone after on a day
This false juge, as telleth us the storie,
As he was wont, sat in his consistorie,
And yaf his domes upon sondry cas;
This false cherl came forth a ful gret pas,
And saide; lord, if that it be your will,
As doth me right upon this pitous bill,

In which I plaine upon Virginius.
And if that he wol sayn it is not thus,
I wol it preve, and finden good witnesse,
That soth is that my bille wol expresse.
The juge answerd, of this in his absence
I may not yeve diffinitif sentence.
Let don him call, and I wol gladly here;
Thou shalt have right, and no wrong as now here.
Virginius came to wete the juges will,
And right anon was red this cursed bill;
The sentence of it was as ye shul here.
To you, my lord sire Appius so dere,
Sheweth your poure servant Claudius,
How that a knight called Virginius,
Agein the lawe, agein all equitee,
Holdeth, expresse agein the will of me,
My servant, which that is my thral by right,
Which from min hous was stolen on a night
While that she was ful yong, I wol it preve
By witnesse, lord, so that it you not greve;
She n'is his doughter nought, what so he say.
Wherfore to you, my lord the juge, I pray;
Yelde me my thral, if that it be your will.
Lo, this was all the sentence of his bill.
Virginius gan upon the cherl behold;
But hastily, er he his tale told,

And wold han preved it, as shuld a knight,
And eke by witnessing of many a wight,
That all was false, that said his adversary,
This cursed juge wolde nothing tary,
Ne here a word more of Virginius,
But yave his jugement, and saide thus.
I deme anon this cherl his servant have.
Thou shalt no lenger in thin hous hire save.
Go bring hire forth, and put hire in our ward.
The cherl shal have his thral; thus I award.
And whan this worthy knight Virginius,
Thurgh sentence of this justice Appius,
Muste by force his dere doughter yeven
Unto the juge, in lecherie to liven,
He goth him home, and set him in his hall,
And let anon his dere doughter call:
And with a face ded as ashen cold,
Upon hire humble face he gan behold,
With fadres pitee stiking thurgh his herte,
Al wold he from his purpos not converte.
Doughter, quod he, Virginia by thy name,
Ther ben two waies, other deth or shame,
That thou must suffre, alas that I was bore!
For never thou deservedest wherfore
To dien with a swerd or with a knif.
O dere doughter, ender of my lif,

Which I have fostred up with swiche plesance,
That thou were never out of my remembrance;
O doughter, which that art my laste wo,
And in my lif my laste joye also,
O gemme of chastitee, in patience
Take thou thy deth, for this is my sentence;
For love and not for hate thou must be ded,
My pitous hond must smiten of thin hed.
Alas that ever Appius thee say!
Thus hath he falsely juged thee to-day.
And told hire all the cas, as ye before
Han herd, it nedeth not to tell it more.
O mercy, dere father, quod this maid.
And with that word she both hire armes laid
About his necke, as she was wont to do,
(The teres brast out of hire eyen two,)
And said, O goode father, shal I die?
Is ther no grace? is ther no remedie?
No certes, dere doughter min, quod he.
Than yeve me leiser, father min, quod she,
My deth for to complaine a litel space:
For parde Jepte yave his doughter grace
For to complaine, or he hire slow, alas!
And God it wot, nothing was hire trespas,
But for she ran hire father first to see,
To welcome him with gret solempnitee.

And with that word she fell aswoune anon,
And after, whan hire swouning was agon,
She riseth up, and to hire father said:
Blessed be God, that I shall die a maid.
Yeve me my deth, or that I have a shame.
Doth with your child your wille a goddes name.
And with that word she praied him ful oft,
That with his swerd he wolde smite hire soft;
And with that word, aswoune again she fell.
Hire father, with ful sorweful herte and will,
Hire hed of smote, and by the top it hent,
And to the juge he gan it to present,
As he sat yet in dome in consistorie.

And whan the juge it saw, as saith the storie,
He bad to take him, and anhang him fast.
But right anon a thousand peple in thrast
To save the knight, for routh and for pitee,
For knowen was the false iniquitee.

The peple anon had suspect in this thing
By maner of the cherles chalenging,
That it was by the assent of Appius;
They wisten wel that he was lecherous.
For which unto this Appius they gon,
And caste him in a prison right anon,
Wheras he slow himself: and Claudius,
That servant was unto this Appius,

Was demed for to hange upon a tree; 12206
But that Virginius of his pitee
So prayed for him, that he was exiled,
And elles certes had he ben begiled:
The remenant were anhanged, more and lesse,
That were consentant of this cursednesse.
Here men may see how sin hath his merite:
Beth ware, for no man wot whom God wol smite
In no degree, ne in which maner wise 12213
The worme of conscience may agrise
Of wicked lif, though it so privee be,
That no man wote therof, sauf God and he:
For be he lewed man or elles lered,
He n'ot how sone that he shal ben afered.
Therfore I rede you this conseil take,
Forsaketh sinne, or sinne you forsake. 12220

THE PARDONERES PROLOGUE.

Our Hoste gan to swere as he were wood;
Harow! (quod he) by nailes and by blood,
This was a false cherl, and a false justice.
As shameful deth, as herte can devise,
Come to thise juges and hir advocas.
Algate this sely maide is slain, alas!
Alas! to dere abought she hire beautee. 12227

Wherfore I say, that al day man may see, 12228
That yeftes of fortune and of nature
Ben cause of deth to many a creature.
Hire beautee was hire deth, I dare wel sain;
Alas! so pitously as she was slain.
Of bothe yeftes, that I speke of now,
Men han ful often more for harm than prow.
But trewely, min owen maister dere,
This was a pitous tale for to here: 12236
But natheles, passe over, is no force.
I pray to God so save thy gentil corps,
And eke thyn urinals, and thy jordanes,
Thin Ypocras, and eke thy Galianes,
And every boist ful of thy letuarie,
God blesse hem and our lady Seinte Marie.
So mote I the, thou art a propre man,
And like a prelat by Seint Ronian; 12244
Said I not wel? I cannot speke in terme;
But wel I wot, thou dost min herte to erme,
That I have almost caught a cardiacle:
By *corpus domini* but I have triacle,
Or elles a draught of moist and corny ale,
Or but I here anon a mery tale,
Myn herte is lost for pitee of this maid.
Thou *bel amy*, thou pardoner, he said,
Tel us som mirth of japes right anon. 12253

It shal be don, quod he, by Seint Ronion.
But first (quod he) here at this ale-stake
I wol both drinke, and biten on a cake.
But right anon thise gentiles gan to crie;
Nay, let him tell us of no ribaudrie.
Tell us som moral thing, that we mow lere,
Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly here.
I graunte ywis, quod he, but I must thinke
Upon som honest thing, while that I drinke.

THE PARDONERES TALE.

Lordings, quod he, in chirche whan I preche,
I peine me to have an hautein speche,
And ring it out, as round as goth a bell,
For I can all by rote that I tell.
My teme is alway on, and ever was;
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
First I pronounce whennes that I come,
And than my bulles shew I all and some:
Our liege lordes sele on my patente,
That shew I first my body to warrente,
That no man be so bold, ne preest ne clerk,
Me to disturbe of Cristes holy werk.
And after that than tell I forth my tales.
Bulles of popes, and of cardinales,

Of patriarkes, and bishoppes I shewe, 12277
And in Latin I speke a wordes fewe,
To saffron with my predication,
And for to stere men to devotion.
Than shew I forth my longe cristal stones,
Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones,
Relikes they ben, as wenen they echon.
Than have I in laton a shulder bone,
Which that was of an holy Jewes shepe. 12285
Good men, say I, take of my wordes kepe:
If that this bone be washe in any well,
If cow, or calf, or shepe, or oxe swell,
That any worm hath ete, or worm ystonge,
Take water of that well, and wash his tonge,
And it is hole anon: and forthermore
Of pockes, and of scab, and every sore
Shal every shepe be hole, that of this well 12293
Drinketh a draught; take kepe of that I tell.
If that the good man, that the bestes oweth,
Wol every weke, er that the cok him croweth,
Fasting ydrinken of this well a draught,
As thilke holy Jew our eldres taught,
His bestes and his store shal multiplie.
And, sires, also it heleth jalousie.
For though a man be falle in jalous rage,
Let maken with this water his potage, 12302

And never shal he more his wif mistrist,
Though he the soth of hire defaute wist;
Al had she taken preestes two or three.
Here is a mitaine eke, that ye may see:
He that his hand wol put in this mitaine,
He shal have multiplying of his graine,
Whan he hath sowen, be it whete or otes,
So that he offer pens or elles grotes.
And, men and women, o thing warne I you:
If any wight be in this chirche now,
That hath don sinne horrible, so that he
Dare not for shame of it yshriven be:
Or any woman, be she yong or old,
That hath ymade hire husbond cokewold,
Swiche folk shul han no power ne no grace
To offer to my relikes in this place.
And who so findeth him out of swiche blame,
He wol come up and offer in Goddes name,
And I assoyle him by the auctoritee,
Which that by bulle ygranted was to me.
By this gaude have I wonnen yere by yere
An hundred mark, sin I was pardonere.
I stonde like a clerk in my pulpet,
And whan the lewed peple is doun yset,
I preche so as ye han herd before,
And tell an hundred false japes more.

Than peine I me to stretchen forth my necke,
And est and west upon the peple I becke,
As doth a dove, sitting upon a berne:
Myn hondes and my tonge gon so yerne,
That it is joye to see my besinesse.
Of avarice and of swiche cursednesse
Is all my preching, for to make hem free
To yeve hir pens, and namely unto me.
For min entente is not but for to winne,
And nothing for correction of sinne.
I recke never whan that they be beried,
Though that hir soules gon a blake beried.
For certes many a predication
Cometh oft time of evil entention;
Som for plesance of folk, and flaterie,
To ben avanced by hypocrisie;
And som for vaine glorie, and som for hate.
For whan I dare non other wayes debate,
Than wol I sting him with my tonge smerte
In preching, so that he shal not asterte
To ben defamed falsely, if that he
Hath trespased to my brethren or to me.
For though I telle not his propre name,
Men shal wel knowen that it is the same
By signes, and by other circumstances.
Thus quite I folk, that don us displesances:

Thus spit I out my venime under hewe
Of holinesse, to seme holy and trewe.
But shortly min entente I wol devise,
I preche of nothing but for covetise.
Therfore my teme is yet, and ever was,
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
Thus can I preche again the same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice.
But though myself be gilty in that sinne,
Yet can I maken other folk to twinne
From avarice, and sore hem to repente.
But that is not my principal entente;
I preche nothing but for covetise.
Of this matere it ought ynough suffise.
Than tell I hem ensamples many on
Of olde stories longe time agon.
For lewed peple loven tales olde;
Swiche thinges can they wel report and holde.
What? trowen ye, that whiles I may preche
And winnen gold and silver for I teche,
That I wol live in poverte wilfully?
Nay, nay, I thought it never trewely.
For I wol preche and beg in sondry londes,
I wol not do no labour with min hondes,
Ne make baskettes for to live therby,
Because I wol not beggen idelly.

I wol non of the apostles contrefete:
I wol have money, wolle, chese, and whete,
Al were it yeven of the pourest page,
Or of the pourest widewe in a village:
Al shulde hire children sterven for famine.
Nay, I wol drinke the licour of the vine,
And have a joly wenche in every toun.
But herkeneth, lordings, in conclusioun,
Your liking is that I shal tell a tale.
Now I have dronke a draught of corny ale,
By God I hope I shal you tell a thing,
That shal by reson ben at your liking:
For though myself be a ful vicious man,
A moral tale yet I you tellen can,
Which I am wont to prechen, for to winne.
Now hold your pees, my tale I wol beginne.

In Flandres whilom was a compagnie
Of yonge folk, that haunteden folie,
As hasard, riot, stewes, and tavernes;
Wheras with harpes, lutes, and giternes,
They dance and plaie at dis bothe day and night,
And ete also, and drinke over hir might;
Thurgh which they don the devil sacrifice
Within the devils temple, in cursed wise,
By superfluitee abhominable.

Hir othes ben so gret and so damnable,
That it is grisly for to here hem swere.
Our blisful lordes body they to-tere;
Hem thought the Jewes rent him not ynough;
And eche of hem at others sinne lough.
And right anon in comen tombesteres
Fetis and smale, and yonge fruitesteres,
Singers with harpes, baudes, wafereres,
Which ben the veray devils officeres,
To kindle and blow the fire of lecherie,
That is annexed unto glotonie.
The holy writ take I to my witnesse,
That luxurie is in wine and dronkenesse.
Lo, how that dronken Loth unkindely
Lay by his daughters two unwetingly,
So dronke he was he n'iste what he wrought.
Herodes, who so wel the stories sought,
Whan he of wine replete was at his feste,
Right at his owen table he yave his heste
To sleen the Baptist John ful gilteles.
Seneca saith a good word douteles:
He saith he can no difference find
Betwix a man that is out of his mind,
And a man whiche that is dronkelew:
But that woodnesse, yfallen in a shrew,
Persevereth lenger than doth dronkenesse.

O glotonie, full of cursednesse;
O cause first of our confusion,
O original of our damnation,
Til Crist had bought us with his blood again.
Loketh, how dere, shortly for to sain,
Abought was thilke cursed vilanie:
Corrupt was all this world for glotonie.
Adam our father, and his wif also,
Fro Paradis, to labour and to wo,
Were driven for that vice, it is no drede.
For while that Adam fasted, as I rede,
He was in Paradis, and whan that he
Ete of the fruit defended on a tree,
Anon he was out cast to wo and peine.
O glotonie, on thee wel ought us plaine.
O, wist a man how many maladies
Folwen of excesse and of glotonies,
He wolde ben the more mesurable
Of his diete, sitting at his table.
Alas! the shorte throte, the tendre mouth,
Maketh that Est and West, and North and South,
In erthe, in air, in water, men to-swinke,
To gete a gloton deintee mete and drinke.
Of this matere, O Poule, wel canst thou trete.
Mete unto wombe, and wombe eke unto mete
Shal God destroien bothe, as Paulus saith.

Alas! a foule thing is it by my faith
To say this word, and fouler is the dede,
Whan man so drinketh of the white and rede,
That of his throte he maketh his privee
Thurgh thilke cursed superfluitee.
The Apostle saith, weping ful pitously,
Ther walken many, of which you told have I,
I say it now weping with pitous vois,
That they ben enemies of Cristes crois:
Of whiche the end is deth, womb is hir God.
O wombe, O belly, stinking is thy cod,
Fulfilled of dong and of corruptioun;
At either end of thee foule is the soun.
How gret labour and cost is thee to find!
Thise cokes how they stamp, and strein, and grind,
And turnen substance into accident,
To fulfill all thy likerous talent!
Out of the harde bones knocken they
The mary, for they casten nought away,
That may go thurgh the gullet soft and sote:
Of spicerie, of leef, of barke, and rote,
Shal ben his sause ymaked by delit
To make him yet a newer appetit.
But certes he, that haunteth swiche delices,
Is ded, while that he liveth in tho vices.
A lecherous thing is wine, and dronkenesse

Is ful of striving and of wretchednesse.
O dronken man, disfigured is thy face,
Sour is thy breth, foul art thou to enbrace:
And thurgh thy dronken nose semeth the soun,
As though thou saidest ay, Sampsoun, Sampsoun:
And yet, God wot, Sampsoun dronk never no wine.
Thou fallest, as it were a stiked swine:
Thy tonge is lost, and all thin honest cure,
For dronkenesse is veray sepulture
Of mannes wit, and his discretion.
In whom that drinke hath domination,
He can no conseil kepe, it is no drede.
Now kepe you fro the white and fro the rede,
And namely fro the white wine of Lepe,
That is to sell in Fishstrete and in Chepe.
This wine of Spaigne crepeth subtilly
In other wines growing faste by,
Of which ther riseth swiche fumositee,
That whan a man hath dronken draughtes three,
And weneth that he be at home in Chepe,
He is in Spaigne, right at the toun of Lepe,
Not at the Rochell, ne at Burdeux toun;
And thanne wol he say, Sampsoun, Sampsoun.
But herkeneth, lordings, o word, I you pray,
That all the soveraine actes, dare I say,
Of victories in the Olde Testament,

Thurgh veray God, that is omnipotent,
Were don in abstinence and in prayere:
Loketh the Bible, and ther ye mow it lere.
  Loke Attila, the grete conquerour,
Died in his slepe, with shame and dishonour,
Bleding ay at his nose in dronkenesse:
A capitaine shulde live in sobrenesse.
  And over all this, aviseth you right wel,
What was commanded unto Lamuel;
Not Samuel, but Lamuel say I.
Redeth the Bible, and find it expresly
Of wine yeving to hem that have justice.
No more of this, for it may wel suffice.
  And now that I have spoke of glotonie,
Now wol I you defenden hasardrie.
Hasard is veray moder of lesinges,
And of deceite, and cursed forsweringes:
Blaspheming of Crist, manslaughter, and wast also
Of catel, and of time; and forthermo
It is repreve, and contrary of honour,
For to ben hold a commun hasardour.
And ever the higher he is of estat,
The more he is holden desolat.
If that a Prince useth hasarderie,
In alle governance and policie
He is, as by commun opinion,

Yhold the lesse in reputation.
  Stilbon, that was a wise embassadour,
Was sent to Corinth with ful gret honour
Fro Calidone, to maken hem alliance:
And whan he came, it happed him *par chance*,
That all the gretest that were of that lond
Yplaying atte hasard he hem fond.
For which, as sone as that it mighte be,
He stale him home agein to his contree,
And sayde ther, I wol not lese my name,
Ne wol not take on me so gret defame,
You for to allie unto non hasardours.
Sendeth som other wise embassadours,
For by my trouthe, me were lever die,
Than I you shuld to hasardours allie.
For ye, that ben so glorious in honours,
Shal not allie you to non hasardours,
As by my wille, ne as by my tretee.
This wise philosophre thus sayd he.
  Loke eke how to the king Demetrius
The king of Parthes, as the book sayth us,
Sent him a pair of dis of gold in scorne,
For he had used hasard therbeforne:
For which he held his glory and his renoun
At no value or reputatioun.
Lordes may finden other maner play

Honest ynough to drive the day away.
Now wol I speke of others false and grete
A word or two, as olde bookes trete.
Gret swering is a thing abhominable,
And false swering is yet more reprevable.
The highe God forbad swering at al,
Witnesse on Mathew: but in special
Of swering sayth the holy Jeremie,
Thou shalt swere soth thin othes, and not lie;
And swere in dome, and eke in rightwisnesse;
But idel swering is a cursednesse.
Behold and see, that in the firste table
Of highe Goddes hestes honourable,
How that the second hest of him is this,
Take not my name in idel or amis.
Lo, rather he forbedeth swiche swering,
Than homicide, or many an other thing.
I say that as by ordre thus it stondeth;
This knoweth he that his hestes understondeth,
How that the second hest of God is that.
And forthermore, I wol thee tell all plat,
That vengeance shal not parten from his hous,
That of his othes is outrageous.
By Goddes precious herte, and by his nailes,
And by the blood of Crist, that is in Hailes,
Seven is my chance, and thin is cink and treye:

By Goddes armes, if thou falsely pleye,
This dagger shal thurghout thin herte go.
This fruit cometh of the bicchel bones two,
Forswering, ire, falsenesse, and homicide.
Now for the love of Crist that for us dide,
Leteth your othes, bothe gret and smale.
But, sires, now wol I tell you forth my tale.
Thise riotoures three, of which I tell,
Long erst or prime rong of any bell,
Were set hem in a taverne for to drinke:
And as they sat, they herd a belle clinke
Beforn a corps, was caried to his grave:
That on of hem gan callen to his knave,
Go bet, quod he, and axe redily,
What corps is this, that passeth here forth by:
And loke that thou report his name wel.
Sire, quod this boy, it nedeth never a del;
It was me told or ye came here two houres;
He was parde an old felaw of youres,
And sodenly he was yslain to-night,
Fordronke as he sat on his benche upright,
Ther came a privee theef, men clepen Deth,
That in this contree all the peple sleth,
And with his spere he smote his herte atwo,
And went his way withouten wordes mo.
He hath a thousand slain this pestilence:

And, maister, or ye come in his presence,
Me thinketh that it were ful necessarie,
For to beware of swiche an adversarie:
Beth redy for to mete him evermore.
Thus taughte me my dame, I say no more.
  By Seinte Marie, sayd this tavernere,
The child sayth soth, for he hath slain this yere
Hens over a mile, within a gret village,
Both man and woman, child, and hyne, and page;
I trowe his habitation be there:
To ben avised gret wisdome it were,
Or that he did a man a dishonour.
  Ye, Goddes armes, quod this riotour,
Is it swiche peril with him for to mete?
I shal him seke by stile and eke by strete.
I make a vow by Goddes digne bones.
Herkeneth, felawes, we three ben all ones:
Let eche of us hold up his hond to other,
And eche of us becomen others brother,
And we wol slen this false traitour deth:
He shal be slain, he that so many sleth,
By Goddes dignitee, or it be night.
  Togeder han thise three hir trouthes plight
To live and dien eche of hem for other,
As though he were his owen boren brother.
And up they stert al dronken in this rage,

And forth they gon towardes that village,
Of which the taverner had spoke beforn,
And many a grisly oth than have they sworn,
And Cristes blessed body they to-rent;
Deth shal be ded, if that we may him hent.
Whan they han gon not fully half a mile,
Right as they wold han troden over a stile,
An olde man and a poure with hem mette.
This olde man ful mekely hem grette,
And sayde thus; Now, lordes, God you see.
The proudest of thise riotoures three
Answerd agen; What? cherl, with sory grace,
Why art thou all forwrapped save thy face?
Why livest thou so longe in so gret age?
This olde man gan loke in his visage,
And sayde thus; For I ne cannot finde
A man, though that I walked into Inde,
Neither in citee, ne in no village,
That wolde change his youthe for min age;
And therfore mote I han min age still
As longe time as it is Goddes will.
Ne deth, alas! ne will not han my lif.
Thus walke I like a resteles caitif,
And on the ground, which is my modres gate,
I knocke with my staf, erlich and late,
And say to hire, Leve mother, let me in.

Lo, how I vanish, flesh, and blood, and skin.
Alas! whan shul my bones ben at reste?
Mother, with you wold I changen my cheste,
That in my chambre longe time hath be,
Ye, for an heren clout to wrap in me.
But yet to me she wol not don that grace,
For which ful pale and welked is my face.
But, sires, to you it is no curtesie
To speke unto an olde man vilanie,
But he trespase in word or elles in dede.
In holy writ ye moun yourselven rede;
Ageins an olde man, hore upon his hede,
Ye shuld arise: therfore I yeve you rede,
Ne doth unto an olde man non harm now,
No more than that ye wold a man did you
In age, if that ye may so long abide.
And God be with you, wher ye go or ride.
I moste go thider as I have to go.
Nay, olde cherl, by God thou shalt not so,
Sayde this other hasardour anon;
Thou partest not so lightly by Seint John.
Thou spake right now of thilke traitour deth,
That in this contree all our frendes sleth;
Have here my trouth as thou art his espie;
Tell wher he is, or thou shalt it abie,
By God and by the holy Sacrement;

For sothly thou art on of his assent
To slen us yonge folk, thou false thefe.
Now, sires, quod he, if it be you so lefe
To finden deth, tourne up this croked way,
For in that grove I left him by my fay
Under a tree, and ther he wol abide;
Ne for your bost he wol him nothing hide.
Se ye that oke? right ther ye shuln him find.
God save you, that bought agen mankind,
And you amende; thus sayd this olde man.
And everich of thise riotoures ran,
Til they came to the tree, and ther they found
Of Floreins fine of gold ycoined round,
Wel nigh an eighte bushels, as hem thought.
No lenger as than after dethe they sought,
But eche of hem so glad was of the sight,
For that the floreins ben so faire and bright,
That doun they sette hem by the precious hord.
The werste of hem he spake the firste word.
Brethren, quod he, take kepe what I shal say;
My wit is gret, though that I bourde and play.
This tresour hath fortune unto us yeven
In mirth and jolitee our lif to liven,
And lightly as it cometh, so wol we spend.
Ey, Goddes precious dignitee, who wend
To-day, that we shuld han so faire a grace?

But might this gold be caried fro this place
Home to myn hous, or elles unto youres,
(For wel I wote that all this gold is oures)
Thanne were we in high felicitee.
But trewely by day it may not be;
Men wolden say that we were theeves strong,
And for our owen tresour don us hong.
This tresour must ycaried be by night
As wisely and as sleighly as it might.
Wherfore I rede, that cut among us alle
We drawe, and let see wher the cut wol falle:
And he that hath the cut, with herte blith,
Shal rennen to the toun, and that ful swith,
And bring us bred and win ful prively:
And two of us shal kepen subtilly
This tresour wel: and if he wol not tarien,
Whan it is night, we wol this tresour carien
By on assent, wher as us thinketh best.
That on of hem the cut brought in his fest,
And bad hem drawe and loke wher it wold falle,
And it fell on the yongest of hem alle:
And forth toward the toun he went anon.
And al so sone as that he was agon,
That on of hem spake thus unto that other;
Thou wotest wel thou art my sworen brother,
Thy profite wol I tell thee right anon.

Thou wost wel that our felaw is agon,
And here is gold, and that ful gret plentee,
That shal departed ben among us three.
But natheles, if I can shape it so,
That it departed were among us two,
Had I not don a frendes turn to thee?
That other answerd, I n'ot how that may be:
He wote wel that the gold is with us tweye.
What shuln we don? what shuln we to him seye?
Shal it be conseil? sayd the firste shrewe;
And I shal tellen thee in wordes fewe
What we shul don, and bring it wel aboute.
I grante, quod that other, out of doute,
That by my trouth I wol thee not bewreie.
Now, quod the first, thou wost wel we ben tweie,
And tweie of us shul strenger be than on.
Loke, whan that he is set, thou right anon
Arise, as though thou woldest with him play;
And I shal rive him thurgh the sides tway,
While that thou stroglest with him as in game,
And with thy dagger loke thou do the same;
And than shal all this gold departed be,
My dere frend, betwixen thee and me:
Than moun we bothe our lustes al fulfille,
And play at dis right at our owen wille.
And thus accorded ben thise shrewes tweye.

To slen the thridde, as ye han herd me seye.
This yongest, which that wente to the toun,
Ful oft in herte he rolleth up and doun
The beautee of thise floreins newe and bright.
O Lord, quod he, if so were that I might
Have all this tresour to myself alone,
Ther n'is no man that liveth under the trone
Of God, that shulde live so mery as I.
And at the last the fend our enemy
Putte in his thought, that he shuld poison beye,
With which he mighte slen his felaws tweye.
For why, the fend fond him in swiche living,
That he had leve to sorwe him to bring.
For this was outrely his ful entente
To slen hem both, and never to repente.
And forth he goth, no lenger wold he tary,
Into the toun unto a Potecary,
And praied him that he him wolde sell
Som poison, that he might his ratouns quell.
And eke ther was a polkat in his hawe,
That, as he sayd, his capons had yslawe:
And fayn he wolde him wreken, if he might,
Of vermine, that destroied hem by night.
The Potecary answerd, Thou shalt have
A thing, as wisly God my soule save,
In all this world ther n'is no creature,

That ete or dronke hath of this confecture,
Not but the mountance of a corne of whete,
That he ne shal his lif anon forlete;
Ye, sterve he shal, and that in lesse while,
Than thou wolt gon a pas not but a mile:
This poison is so strong and violent.
This cursed man hath in his hond yhent
This poison in a box, and swithe he ran
Into the nexte strete unto a man,
And borwed of him large botelles three;
And in the two the poison poured he;
The thridde he kepte clene for his drinke,
For all the night he shope him for to swinke
In carying of the gold out of that place.
And whan this riotour, with sory grace,
Hath filled with win his grete botelles three,
To his felawes agen repaireth he.
What nedeth it therof to sermon more?
For right as they had cast his deth before,
Right so they han him slain, and that anon.
And whan that this was don, thus spake that on;
Now let us sit and drinke, and make us mery,
And afterward we wiln his body bery.
And with that word it happed him *par cas*,
To take the botelle, ther the poison was,
And dronke, and yave his felaw drinke also,

For which anon they storven bothe two.
But certes I suppose that Avicenne
Wrote never in no canon, ne in no fenne,
Mo wonder signes of empoisoning,
Than had thise wretches two or hir ending.
Thus ended ben thise homicides two,
And eke the false empoisoner also.
O cursednesse of alle cursednesse!
O traitours homicide! O wickednesse!
O glotonie, luxurie, and hasardrie!
Thou blasphemour of Crist with vilanie,
And othes grete, of usage and of pride!
Alas! mankinde, how may it betide,
That to thy Creatour, which that thee wrought,
And with his precious herte-blood thee bought,
Thou art so false and so unkind, alas!
Now, good men, God foryeve you your trespas,
And ware you fro the sinne of avarice.
Min holy pardon may you all warice,
So that ye offre nobles or starlinges,
Or elles silver broches, spones, ringes.
Boweth your hed under this holy Bulle.
Cometh up, ye wives, and offreth of your wolle;
Your names I entre here in my roll anon;
Into the blisse of heven shul ye gon:
I you assoile by min high powere,

You that wiln offre, as clene and eke as clere
As ye were borne. Lo, sires, thus I preche;
And Jesu Crist, that is our soules leche,
So graunte you his pardon to receive;
For that is best, I wol you not deceive.
But, sires, o word forgate I in my tale;
I have relikes and pardon in my male,
As faire as any man in Englelond,
Which were me yeven by the Popes hond.
If any of you wol of devotion
Offren, and han min absolution,
Cometh forth anon, and kneleth here adoun,
And mekely receiveth my pardoun.
Or elles taketh pardon, as ye wende,
Al newe and freshe at every tounes ende,
So that ye offren alway newe and newe,
Nobles or pens, which that ben good and trewe.
It is an honour to everich that is here,
That ye moun have a suffisant pardonere
To assoilen you in contree as ye ride,
For aventures, which that moun betide.
Paraventure ther may falle on, or two,
Doun of his hors, and breke his necke atwo.
Loke, which a seurtee is it to you alle,
That I am in your felawship yfalle,
That may assoile you bothe more and lasse,

Whan that the soule shal fro the body passe.
I rede that our hoste shal beginne,
For he is most envoluped in sinne.
Come forth, sire hoste, and offre first anon,
And thou shalt kisse the relikes everich on,
Ye for a grote; unbokel anon thy purse.
Nay nay, quod he, than have I Cristes curse.
Let be, quod he, it shal not be, so the ich.
Thou woldest make me kisse thin olde brech,
And swere it were a relike of a seint,
Though it were with thy foundement depeint.
But by the crois, which that Seint Heleine fond,
I wolde I had thin coilons in min hond,
Instede of relikes, or of seintuarie.
Let cut hem of, I wol thee help hem carie;
They shul be shrined in an hogges tord.
This Pardoner answered not a word;
So wroth he was, no word ne wolde he say.
Now, quod our hoste, I wol no lenger play
With thee, ne with non other angry man.
But right anon the worthy knight began,
(Whan that he saw that all the peple lough)
No more of this, for it is right ynough.
Sire Pardoner, be mery and glad of chere;
And ye, sire hoste, that ben to me so dere,
I pray you that ye kisse the Pardoner;

And, Pardoner, I pray thee draw thee ner,
And as we diden, let us laugh and play.
Anon they kissed, and riden forth hir way.

THE SHIPMANNES PROLOGUE.

Our hoste upon his stirrops stode anon,
And saide; Good men, herkeneth everich on,
This was a thrifty tale for the nones.
Sire parish preest, quod he, for Goddes bones,
Tell us a tale, as was thy forward yore:
I see wel that ye lerned men in lore
Can mochel good, by Goddes dignitee.
The Person him answerd, *Benedicite!*
What eileth the man, so sinfully to swere?
Our hoste answerd, O Jankin, be ye there?
Now, good men, quod our hoste, herkneth to me.
I smell a loller in the wind, quod he.
Abideth for Goddes digne passion,
For we shul han a predication:
This loller here wol prechen us somwhat.
Nay by my fathers soule, that shal he nat,
Sayde the Shipman, here shal he nat preche,
He shal no gospel glosen here ne teche.
We leven all in the gret God, quod he.
He wolde sowen som difficultee,

Or springen cockle in our clene corne.
And therfore, hoste, I warne thee beforne,
My joly body shal a tale telle,
And I shal clinken you so mery a belle,
That I shal waken all this compagnie:
But it shal not ben of philosophie,
Ne of physike, ne termes queinte of lawe;
Ther is but litel Latin in my mawe.

THE SHIPMANNES TALE.

A Marchant whilom dwelled at Seint Denise,
That riche was, for which men held him wise.
A wif he had of excellent beautee,
And compaignable, and revelous was she,
Which is a thing that causeth more dispence,
Than worth is all the chere and reverence,
That men hem don at festes and at dances.
Swiche salutations and contenances
Passen, as doth a shadwe upon the wall:
But wo is him that payen mote for all.
The sely husbond algate he mote pay,
He mote us clothe and he mote us array
All for his owen worship richely:
In which array we dancen jolily.
And if that he may not paraventure,

Or elles lust not swiche dispence endure,
But thinketh it is wasted and ylost,
Than mote another payen for our cost,
Or lene us gold, and that is perilous.
This noble Marchant held a worthy hous,
For which he had all day so gret repaire
For his largesse, and for his wif was faire,
That wonder is: but herkeneth to my tale.
Amonges all thise gestes gret and smale,
Ther was a Monk, a faire man and a bold,
I trow a thritty winter he was old,
That ever in on was drawing to that place.
This yonge Monk, that was so faire of face,
Acquainted was so with this goode man,
Sithen that hir firste knowlege began,
That in his hous as familier was he,
As it possible is any frend to be.
And for as mochel as this goode man
And eke this Monk, of which that I began,
Were bothe two yborne in o village,
The Monk him claimeth, as for cosinage,
And he again him sayd not ones nay,
But was as glad therof, as foule of day;
For to his herte it was a gret plesance.
Thus ben they knit with eterne alliance,
And eche of hem gan other for to ensure

Of brotherhed, while that hir lif may dure.
Free was Dan John, and namely of dispence
As in that hous, and ful of diligence
To don plesance, and also gret costage:
He not forgate to yeve the leste page
In all that hous; but, after hir degree,
He yave the lord, and sithen his meinee,
Whan that he came, som maner honest thing;
For which they were as glad of his coming
As foule is fayn, whan that the sonne up riseth.
No more of this as now, for it sufficeth.
But so befell, this Marchant on a day
Shope him to maken redy his array
Toward the toun of Brugges for to fare,
To byen ther a portion of ware:
For which he hath to Paris sent anon
A messager, and praied hath Dan John
That he shuld come to Seint Denis, and pleie
With him, and with his wif, a day or tweie,
Or he to Brugges went, in alle wise.
This noble Monk, of which I you devise,
Hath of his Abbot, as him list, licence,
(Because he was a man of high prudence,
And eke an officer out for to ride,
To seen hir granges, and hir bernes wide)
And unto Seint Denis he cometh anon.

Who was so welcome as my lord Dan John,
Our dere cousin, ful of curtesie?
With him he brought a jubbe of Malvesie,
And eke another ful of fine Vernage,
And volatile, as ay was his usage:
And thus I let hem ete, and drinke, and pleye,
This marchant and this monk, a day or tweye.
The thridde day this marchant up ariseth,
And on his nedes sadly him aviseth:
And up into his countour hous goth he,
To reken with himselven, wel may be,
Of thilke yere, how that it with him stood,
And how that he dispended had his good,
And if that he encresed were or non.
His bookes and his bagges many on
He layth beforn him on his counting bord.
Ful riche was his tresour and his hord;
For which ful fast his countour dore he shet;
And eke he n'olde no man shuld him let
Of his accountes, for the mene time:
And thus he sit, til it was passed prime.
Dan John was risen in the morwe also,
And in the gardin walketh to and fro,
And hath his thinges sayd ful curteisly.
This goode wif came walking prively
Into the gardin, ther he walketh soft,

And him saluëth, as she hath don oft:
A maiden child came in hire compagnie,
Which as hire lust she may governe and gie,
For yet under the yerde was the maide.
O dere cosin min Dan John, she saide,
What aileth you so rathe for to arise?
Nece, quod he, it ought ynough suffise
Five houres for to slepe upon a night:
But it were for an olde appalled wight,
As ben thise wedded men, that lie and dare,
As in a fourme sitteth a wery hare,
Were al forstraught with houndes gret and smale.
But, dere nece, why be ye so pale?
I trowe certes, that our goode man
Hath you laboured, sith this night began,
That you were nede to resten hastily.
And with that word he lough ful merily,
And of his owen thought he wexe all red.
This faire wif gan for to shake hire hed,
And saied thus; Ye, God wote all, quod she.
Nay, cosin min, it stant not so with me.
For by that God, that yave me soule and lif,
In all the reame of Fraunce is ther no wif,
That lasse lust hath to that sory play;
For I may singe alas and wala wa
That I was borne, but to no wight (quod she)

Dare I not tell how that it stant with me.
Wherfore I thinke out of this lond to wende,
Or elles of myself to make an ende,
So ful am I of drede and eke of care.
This monk began upon this wif to stare,
And sayd, Alas! my nece, God forbede,
That ye for any sorwe, or any drede,
Fordo yourself: but telleth me your grefe,
Paraventure I may in your mischefe
Conseile or helpe: and therfore telleth me
All your annoy, for it shal ben secree.
For on my Portos here I make an oth,
That never in my lif, for lefe ne loth,
Ne shal I of no conseil you bewray.
The same agen to you, quod she, I say.
By God and by this Portos I you swere,
Though men me wolden all in peces tere,
Ne shal I never, for to gon to helle,
Bewrey o word of thing that ye me tell,
Nought for no cosinage, ne alliance,
But veraily for love and affiance.
Thus ben they sworne, and hereupon they kiste,
And eche of hem told other what hem liste.
Cosin, quod she, if that I had a space,
As I have non, and namely in this place,
Than wold I tell a legend of my lif,

What I have suffred sith I was a wif
With min husbond, al be he your cosin.
Nay, quod this monk, by God and Seint Martin,
He n'is no more cosin unto me,
Than is the leef that hangeth on the tree:
I clepe him so by Seint Denis of France
To han the more cause of acquaintance
Of you, which I have loved specially
Aboven alle women sikerly,
This swere I you on my professioun:
Telleth your grefe, lest that he come adoun,
And hasteth you, and goth away anon.
My dere love, quod she, o my Dan John,
Ful lefe were me this conseil for to hide,
But out it mote, I may no lenger abide.
Myn husbond is to me the werste man,
That ever was sith that the world began:
But sith I am a wif, it sit not me
To tellen no wight of our privetee,
Neither in bed, ne in non other place;
God shilde I shulde it tellen for his grace;
A wif ne shal not sayn of hire husbond
But all honour, as I can understond;
Save unto you thus moch I tellen shal:
As helpe me God, he is nought worth at all,
In no degree, the value of a flie.

But yet me greveth most his nigardie:
And wel ye wot, that women naturally
Desiren thinges sixe, as wel as I.
They wolden that hir husbondes shulden be
Hardy, and wise, and riche, and therto free,
And buxome to his wif, and fresh a-bedde.
But by that ilke Lord that for us bledde,
For his honour myselven for to array,
A sonday next I muste nedes pay
An hundred franks, or elles am I lorne.
Yet were me lever that I were unborne,
Than me were don a sclandre or vilanie.
And if min husbond eke might it espie,
I n'ere but lost; and therfore I you prey
Lene me this summe, or elles mote I dey.
Dan John, I say, lene me this hundred frankes;
Parde I wol not faille you my thankes,
If that you list to do that I you pray.
For at a certain day I wol you pay,
And do to you what plesance and service
That I may don, right as you list devise:
And but I do, God take on me vengeance,
As foule as ever had Genelon of France.
This gentil monk answerd in this manere;
Now trewely, min owen lady dere,
I have (quod he) on you so grete a routhe,

That I you swere, and plighte you my trouthe,
That whan your husbond is to Flandres fare,
I wol deliver you out of this care,
For I wol bringen you an hundred frankes.
And with that word he caught hire by the flankes,
And hire embraced hard, and kiste hire oft.
Goth now your way, quod he, al stille and soft,
And let us dine as sone as that ye may,
For by my kalender it is prime of day:
Goth now, and beth as trewe as I shal be.
Now elles God forbede, sire, quod she;
And forth she goth, as joly as a pie,
And bad the cokes that they shuld hem hie,
So that men mighten dine, and that anon.
Up to hire husbond is this wif ygon,
And knocketh at his countour boldely.
Qui est la? quod he. Peter, it am I,
Quod she. What, sire, how longe wol ye fast?
How longe time wol ye reken and cast
Your summes, and your bookes, and your thinges?
The devil have part of all swiche rekeninges.
Ye han ynough parde of Goddes sonde.
Come doun to-day, and let your bagges stonde.
Ne be ye not ashamed, that Dan John
Shal fasting all this day elenge gon?
What? let us here a masse, and go we dine.

Wif, quod this man, litel canst thou divine
The curious besinesse that we have:
For of us chapmen, all so God me save,
And by that lord that cleped is Seint Ive,
Scarsly amonges twenty, ten shul thrive
Continuelly, lasting unto oure age.
We moun wel maken chere and good visage,
And driven forth the world as it may be,
And kepen oure estat in privitee,
Til we be ded, or elles that we play
A pilgrimage, or gon out of the way.
And therfore have I gret necessitee
Upon this queinte world to avisen me.
For evermore mote we stond in drede
Of hap and fortune in our chapmanhede.
To Flandres wol I go to-morwe at day,
And come agein as sone as ever I may:
For which, my dere wif, I thee beseke
As be to every wight buxom and meke,
And for to kepe our good be curious,
And honestly governe wel our hous.
Thou hast ynough, in every maner wise,
That to a thrifty houshold may suffice.
Thee lacketh non array, ne no vitaille;
Of silver in thy purse shalt thou not faille.
And with that word his countour dore he shette,

And doun he goth; no lenger wold he lette;
And hastily a masse was ther saide,
And spedily the tables were ylaide,
And to the diner faste they hem spedde,
And richely this monk the chapman fedde.
  And after diner Dan John sobrely
This chapman toke apart, and prively
He said him thus; Cosin, it stondeth so,
That, wel I see, to Brugges ye wol go,
God and Seint Austin spede you and gide.
I pray you, cosin, wisely that ye ride;
Governeth you also of your diete
Attemprely, and namely in this hete.
Betwix us two nedeth no strange fare;
Farewel, cosin, God shilde you fro care.
If any thing ther be by day or night,
If it lie in my power and my might,
That ye me wol command in any wise,
It shal be don, right as ye wol devise.
  But o thing or ye go, if it may be,
I wolde prayen you for to lene me
An hundred frankes for a weke or tweye,
For certain bestes that I muste beye,
To storen with a place that is oures:
(God helpe me so, I wold that it were youres)
I shal not faille surely of my day,

Not for a thousand frankes, a mile way.
But let this thing be secree, I you preye;
For yet to-night thise bestes mote I beye.
And fare now wel, min owen cosin dere,
Grand mercy of your cost and of your chere.
This noble marchant gentilly anon
Answerd and said, O cosin min Dan John,
Now sikerly this is a smal requeste:
My gold is youres, whan that it you leste,
And not only my gold, but my chaffare:
Take what you lest, God shilde that ye spare.
But o thing is, ye know it wel ynough
Of chapmen, that hir money is hir plough.
We moun creancen while we han a name,
But goodles for to ben it is no game.
Pay it agen, whan it lith in your ese;
After my might ful fayn wold I you plese.
Thise hundred frankes fet he forth anon,
And prively he toke hem to Dan John:
No wight in al this world wist of this lone,
Saving this marchant, and Dan John alone.
They drinke, and speke, and rome a while and pleye,
Til that Dan John rideth to his abbeye.
The morwe came, and forth this marchant rideth
To Flandres ward, his prentis wel him gideth,
Til he came in to Brugges merily.

Now goth this marchant faste and besily
About his nede, and bieth, and creanceth;
He neither playeth at the dis, ne danceth;
But as a marchant, shortly for to tell,
He ledeth his lif, and ther I let him dwell.
The sonday next the marchant was agon,
To Seint Denis ycomen is Dan John,
With croune and berde all fresh and newe yshave.
In all the hous ther n'as so litel a knave,
Ne no wight elles, that he n'as ful fain,
For that my lord Dan John was come again.
And shortly to the point right for to gon,
This faire wif accordeth with Dan John,
That for thise hundred frankes he shuld all night
Haven hire in his armes bolt-upright:
And this accord parformed was in dede.
In mirth all night a besy lif they lede
Til it was day, that Dan John yede his way,
And bad the meinie farewel, have good day.
For non of hem, ne no wight in the toun,
Hath of Dan John right non suspectioun;
And forth he rideth home to his abbey,
Or wher him liste, no more of him I sey.
This marchant, whan that ended was the faire,
To Seint Denis he gan for to repaire,
And with his wif he maketh feste and chere,

And telleth hire that chaffare is so dere,
That nedes muste he make a chevisance,
For he was bonde in a recognisance,
To payen twenty thousand sheldes anon.
For which this marchant is to Paris gon
To borwe of certain frendes that he hadde
A certain frankes, and som with him he ladde.
And whan that he was come in to the toun,
For gret chiertee and gret affectioun
Unto Dan John he goth him first to pleye;
Not for to axe or borwe of him moneye,
But for to wete and seen of his welfare,
And for to tellen him of his chaffare,
As frendes don, whan they ben mette in fere.
Dan John him maketh feste and mery chere;
And he him tolde agen ful specially,
How he had wel ybought and graciously
(Thanked be God) all hole his marchandise:
Save that he must in alle manere wise
Maken a chevisance, as for his beste:
And than he shulde ben in joye and reste.
Dan John answered, Certes I am fain,
That ye in hele be comen home again:
And if that I were riche, as have I blisse,
Of twenty thousand sheldes shuld ye not misse,
For ye so kindely this other day

Lente me gold, and as I can and may
I thanke you, by God and by Seint Jame.
But natheles I toke unto our Dame,
Your wif at home, the same gold again
Upon your benche, she wote it wel certain,
By certain tokenes that I can hire tell.
Now by your leve, I may no lenger dwell;
Our abbot wol out of this toun anon,
And in his compagnie I muste gon.
Grete wel our dame, min owen nece swete,
And farewel, dere cosin, til we mete.
This marchant, which that was ful ware and wise,
Creanced hath, and paide eke in Paris
To certain Lumbardes redy in hir hond
The summe of gold, and gate of hem his bond,
And home he goth, mery as a popingay.
For wel he knew he stood in swiche array,
That nedes muste he winne in that viage
A thousand frankes, above all his costage.
His wif ful redy mette him at the gate,
As she was wont of old usage algate:
And all that night in mirthe they ben sette,
For he was riche, and clerely out of dette.
Whan it was day, this marchant gan enbrace
His wif all newe, and kiste hire in hire face,
And up he goth, and maketh it ful tough.

No more, quod she, by God ye have ynough:
And wantonly agen with him she plaide,
Til at the last this marchant to hire saide.
By God, quod he, I am a litel wrothe
With you, my wif, although it be me lothe:
And wote ye why? by God, as that I gesse,
That ye han made a manere strangenesse
Betwixen me and my cosin Dan John.
Ye shuld have warned me, or I had gon,
That he you had an hundred frankes paide
By redy token: and held him evil apaide,
For that I to him spake of chevisance:
(Me semed so as by his contenance)
But natheles by God our heven king,
I thoughte not to axe of him no thing.
I pray thee, wif, ne do thou no more so.
Tell me alway, er that I fro thee go,
If any dettour hath in min absence
Ypaide thee, lest thurgh thy negligence
I might him axe a thing that he hath paide.
This wif was not aferde ne affraide,
But boldely she saide, and that anon;
Mary I defie that false monk Dan John,
I kepe not of his tokenes never a del:
He toke me certain gold, I wote it wel.
What? evil thedome on his monkes snoute!

For, God it wote, I wend withouten doute,
That he had yeve it me, because of you,
To don therwith min honour and my prow,
For cosinage, and eke for *belle chere*,
That he hath had ful often times here.
But sith I see I stonde in swiche disjoint,
I wol answere you shortly to the point.
  Ye have mo slakke dettours than am I:
For I wol pay you wel and redily
Fro day to day, and if so be I faille,
I am your wif, score it upon my taile,
And I shal pay as sone as ever I may.
For by my trouth, I have on min array,
And not in waste, bestowed it every del.
And for I have bestowed it so wel
For your honour, for Goddes sake I say,
As beth not wrothe, but let us laugh and play.
Ye shal my joly body han to wedde:
By God I n'ill not pay you but a-bedde:
Foryeve it me, min owen spouse dere;
Turne hitherward and maketh better chere.
  This marchant saw ther was no remedy:
And for to chide, it n'ere but a foly,
Sith that the thing may not amended be.
Now, wif, he said, and I foryeve it thee;
But by thy lif ne be no more so large;

Kepe bet my good, this yeve I thee in charge.
Thus endeth now my tale, and God us sende
Taling ynough, unto our lives ende.

THE PRIORESSES PROLOGUE.

Wel said by *corpus Domini*, quod our Hoste,
Now longe mote thou sailen by the coste,
Thou gentil Maister, gentil Marinere.
God give the monke a thousand last quad yere.
A ha, felawes, beth ware of swiche a jape.
The monke put in the mannes hode an ape,
And in his wifes eke, by Seint Austin.
Draweth no monkes more into your in.
But now passe over, and let us seke aboute,
Who shal now tellen first of all this route
Another tale: and with that word he said,
As curteisly as it had ben a maid,
My lady Prioresse, by your leve,
So that I wist I shuld you not agreve,
I wolde demen, that ye tellen shold
A tale next, if so were that ye wold.
Now wol ye vouchesauf, my lady dere?
Gladly, quod she, and saide as ye shul here.

THE PRIORESSES TALE.

O Lord our lord, thy name how merveillous
Is in this large world ysprad! (quod she)
For not al only thy laude precious
Parfourmed is by men of dignitee,
But by the mouth of children thy bountee
Parfourmed is, for on the brest souking
Somtime shewen they thin herying.

Wherfore in laude, as I can best and may,
Of thee and of the white lily flour,
Which that thee bare, and is a maide alway,
To tell a storie I wol do my labour;
Not that I may encresen hire honour,
For she hireselven is honour and rote
Of bountee, next hire sone, and soules bote.

O mother maide, o maide and mother fre,
O bushe unbrent, brenning in Moyses sight,
That ravishedest doun fro the deitee,
Thurgh thin humblesse, the gost that in thee alight:
Of whos vertue, whan he thin herte light,
Conceived was the fathers sapience:
Helpe me to tell it in thy reverence.

Lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence,
Thy vertue and thy gret humilitee,
Ther may no tonge expresse in no science:
For somtime, lady, or men pray to thee,
Thou gost beforn of thy benignitee,
And getest us the light, of thy prayere,
To giden us unto thy sone so dere.

My conning is so weke, o blisful quene,
For to declare thy grete worthinesse,
That I ne may the weighte not sustene;
But as a child of twelf moneth old or lesse,
That can unnethes any word expresse,
Right so fare I, and therfore I you pray,
Gideth my song, that I shal of you say.

THER was in Asie, in a gret citee,
Amonges Cristen folk a Jewerie,
Sustened by a lord of that contree,
For foule usure, and lucre of vilanie,
Hateful to Crist, and to his compagnie:
And thurgh the strete men mighten ride and wende,
For it was free, and open at eyther ende.

A litel scole of Cristen folk ther stood
Doun at the ferther ende, in which ther were

Children an hepe comen of Cristen blood,
That lerned in that scole yere by yere,
Swiche manere doctrine as men used there:
This is to say, to singen and to rede,
As smale children don in hir childhede.

Among thise children was a widewes sone,
A litel clergion, sevene yere of age,
That day by day to scole was his wone,
And eke also, wheras he sey the image
Of Cristes moder, had he in usage,
As him was taught, to knele adoun, and say
Ave Marie, as he goth by the way.

Thus hath this widewe hire litel sone ytaught
Our blisful Lady, Cristes moder dere,
To worship ay, and he forgate it naught:
For sely childe wol alway sone lere.
But ay, whan I remembre on this matere,
Seint Nicholas stant ever in my presence,
For he so yong to Crist did reverence.

This litel childe his litel book lerning,
As he sate in the scole at his primere,
He *Alma redemptoris* herde sing,
As children lered hir antiphonere:

And as he dorst, he drow him nere and nere,
And herkened ay the wordes and the note,
Til he the firste vers coude al by rote.

Nought wist he what this Latin was to say,
For he so yonge and tendre was of age;
But on a day his felaw gan he pray
To expounden him this song in his langage,
Or telle him why this song was in usage:
This prayde he him to construe and declare,
Ful often time upon his knees bare.

His felaw, which that elder was than he,
Answerd him thus: This song, I have herd say,
Was maked of our blisful Lady fre,
Hire to salue, and eke hire for to prey
To ben our help, and socour whan we dey.
I can no more expound in this matere:
I lerne song, I can but smal grammere.

And is this song maked in reverence
Of Cristes moder? said this innocent;
Now certes I wol don my diligence
To conne it all, or Cristemasse be went,
Though that I for my primer shal be shent,
And shal be beten thries in an houre,
I wol it conne, our Ladie for to honoure.

His felaw taught him homeward prively
Fro day to day, til he coude it by rote,
And than he song it wel and boldely
Fro word to word according with the note:
Twies a day it passed thurgh his throte,
To scoleward and homeward whan he wente:
On Cristes moder set was his entente.

As I have said, thurghout the Jewerie
This litel child as he came to and fro,
Ful merily than wold he sing and crie,
O Alma redemptoris, ever mo:
The swetenesse hath his herte persed so
Of Cristes moder, that to hire to pray
He cannot stint of singing by the way.

Our firste fo, the serpent Sathanas,
That hath in Jewes herte his waspes nest,
Up swale and said, O Ebraike peple, alas!
Is this to you a thing that is honest,
That swiche a boy shal walken as him leste
In your despit, and sing of swiche sentence,
Which is again our lawes reverence?

From thennesforth the Jewes han conspired
This innocent out of this world to chace:
An homicide therto han they hired,

That in an aleye had a privee place,
And as the child gan forthby for to pace,
This cursed Jew him hent, and held him fast,
And cut his throte, and in a pit him cast.

I say that in a wardrope they him threwe,
Wher as thise Jewes purgen hir entraille.
O cursed folk, of Herodes alle newe,
What may your evil entente you availle?
Mordre wol out, certein it wol not faille,
And namely ther the honour of God shal sprede:
The blood out crieth on your cursed dede.

O martyr souded in virginitee,
Now maist thou singe, and folwen ever in on
The white lamb celestial, quod she,
Of which the gret Evangelist Seint John
In Pathmos wrote, which sayth that they that gon
Beforn this lamb, and singe a song al newe,
That never fleshly woman they ne knewe.

This poure widewe awaiteth al that night
After hire litel childe, and he came nought:
For which as sone as it was dayes light,
Witn face pale of drede and besy thought,
She hath at scole and elleswher him sought,

Til finally she gan so fer aspie,
That he last seen was in the Jewerie.

With modres pitee in hire brest enclosed
She goth, as she were half out of hire minde,
To every place, wher she hath supposed
By likelihed hire litel child to finde:
And ever on Cristes moder meke and kinde
She cried, and at the laste thus she wrought,
Among the cursed Jewes she him sought.

She freyneth, and she praieth pitously
To every Jew that dwelled in thilke place,
To telle hire, if hire child went ought forthby:
They sayden, Nay; but Jesu of his grace
Yave in hire thought, within a litel space,
That in that place after hire sone she cride,
Ther he was casten in a pit beside.

O grete God, that parformest thy laude
By mouth of innocentes, lo here thy might!
This gemme of chastitee, this emeraude,
And eke of martirdome the rubie bright,
Ther he with throte ycorven lay upright,
He *Alma redemptoris* gan to singe
So loude, that all the place gan to ringe.

The Cristen folk, that thurgh the strete wente,
In comen, for to wondre upon this thing:
And hastifly they for the provost sente.
He came anon withouten tarying,
And herieth Crist, that is of heven king,
And eke his moder, honour of mankind,
And after that the Jewes let he binde.

This child with pitous lamentation
Was taken up, singing his song alway:
And with honour and gret procession,
They carien him unto the next abbey.
His moder swouning by the bere lay;
Unnethes might the peple that was there
This newe Rachel bringen fro his bere.

With turment, and with shameful deth eche on
This provost doth thise Jewes for to sterve,
That of this morder wiste, and that anon;
He n'olde no swiche cursednesse observe:
Evil shal he have, that evil wol deserve.
Therfore with wilde hors he did hem drawe,
And after that he heng hem by the lawe.

Upon his bere ay lith this innocent
Beforn the auter while the masse last:

And after that, the abbot with his covent
Han spedde hem for to berie him ful fast:
And whan they holy water on him cast,
Yet spake this child, whan spreint was the holy water,
And sang, *o Alma redemptoris mater.*

This abbot, which that was an holy man,
As monkes ben, or elles ought to be,
This yonge child to conjure he began,
And said; O dere child, I halse thee
In vertue of the holy Trinitee,
Tell me what is thy cause for to sing,
Sith that thy throte is cut to my seming.

My throte is cut unto my nekke-bon,
Saide this child, and as by way of kinde
I shuld have deyd, ye longe time agon:
But Jesu Crist, as ye in bookes finde,
Wol that his glory last and be in minde,
And for the worship of his moder dere,
Yet may I sing *o Alma* loude and clere.

This welle of mercie, Cristes moder swete,
I loved alway, as after my conning:
And whan that I my lif shulde forlete,
To me she came, and bad me for to sing
This antem veraily in my dying,

As ye han herde, and, whan that I had songe,
Me thought she laid a grain upon my tonge.

Wherfore I sing, and sing I mote certain
In honour of that blisful maiden free,
Til fro my tonge of taken is the grain.
And after that thus saide she to me;
My litel child, than wol I fetchen thee,
Whan that the grain is fro thy tong ytake:
Be not agaste, I wol thee not forsake.

This holy monk, this abbot him mene I,
His tonge out caught, and toke away the grain;
And he yave up the gost ful softely.
And whan this abbot had this wonder sein,
His salte teres trilled adoun as reyne:
And groff he fell al platte upon the ground,
And still he lay, as he had ben ybound.

The covent lay eke upon the pavement
Weping and herying Cristes moder dere.
And after that they risen, and forth ben went,
And toke away this martir fro his bere,
And in a tombe of marble stones clere
Enclosen they his litel body swete:
Ther he is now, God lene us for to mete.

O yonge Hew of Lincoln, slain also
With cursed Jewes, as it is notable,
For it n'is but a litel while ago,
Pray eke for us, we sinful folk unstable,
That of his mercy God so merciable
On us his grete mercie multiplie,
For reverence of his moder Marie.

PROLOGUE TO SIRE THOPAS.

WHAN said was this miracle, every man
As sober was, that wonder was to see,
Til that our hoste to japen he began,
And than at erst he loked upon me,
And saide thus; What man art thou? quod he.
Thou lokest, as thou woldest finde an hare,
For ever upon the ground I see thee stare.

Approche nere, and loke up merily.
Now ware you, sires, and let this man have place.
He in the waste is shapen as wel as I:
This were a popet in an arme to enbrace
For any woman, smal and faire of face.
He semeth elvish by his contenance,
For unto no wight doth he daliance.

Say now somwhat, sin other folk han saide;
ell us a tale of mirthe and that anon.
oste, quod I, ne be not evil apaide,
or other tale certes can I non,
ut of a rime I lerned yore agon.
e, that is good, quod he, we shullen here
om deintee thing, me thinketh by thy chere.

THE RIME OF SIRE THOPAS,

Listeneth, lordinges, in good entent,
And I wol tell you *verament*
Of mirthe and of solas,
Al of a knight was faire and gent
In bataille and in turnament,
His name was sire Thopas.

Yborne he was in fer contree,
In Flandres, al beyonde the see,
At Popering in the place,
His father was a man ful free,
And lord he was of that contree,
As it was Goddes grace.

Sire Thopas was a doughty swain,
White was his face as paindemaine

His lippes red as rose.
His rudde is like scarlet in grain,
And I you tell in good certain
He had a semely nose.

His here, his berde, was like safroun,
That to his girdle raught adoun,
His shoon of cordewane;
Of Brugges were his hosen broun;
His robe was of ciclatoun,
That coste many a jane.

He coude hunt at the wilde dere,
And ride on hauking for the rivere
With grey goshauk on honde:
Therto he was a good archere,
Of wrastling was ther non his pere,
Ther ony ram shuld stonde.

Ful many a maide bright in bour
They mourned for him *par amour*,
Whan hem were bet to slepe;
But he was chaste and no lechour,
And swete as is the bramble flour,
That bereth the red hepe.

And so it fell upon a day,
Forsoth, as I you tellen may,
Sire Thopas wold out ride;
He worth upon his stede gray,
And in his hond a launcegay,
A long swerd by his side.

He priketh thurgh a faire forest,
Therin is many a wilde best,
Ye bothe buck and hare,
And as he priked North and Est,
I telle it you, him had almeste
Betidde a sory care.

Ther springen herbes grete and smale,
The licoris and the setewale,
And many a cloue gilofre,
And notemuge to put in ale,
Whether it be moist or stale,
Or for to lain in cofre.

The briddes singen, it is no nay,
The sperhauk and the popingay,
That joye it was to here,
The throstel cok made eke his lay,

The wode dove upon the spray
He sang ful loude and clere.

Sire Thopas fell in love-longing
Al whan he herd the throstel sing,
And priked as he were wood;
His faire stede in his priking
So swatte, that men might him wring,
His sides were al blood.

Sire Thopas eke so wery was
For priking on the softe gras,
So fiers was his corage,
That doun he laid him in that place
To maken his stede som solace,
And yaf him good forage.

A, Seinte Mary, *benedicite*,
What aileth this love at me
To binde me so sore?
Me dremed all this night parde,
An elf-quene shal my lemman be,
And slepe under my gore.

An elf-quene wol I love ywis,
For in this world no woman is

Worthy to be my make || in toun,—
All other women I forsake,
And to an elf-quene I me take
By dale and eke by doun.

Into his sadel he clombe anon,
And priked over stile and ston
An elf-quene for to espie,
Til he so long had ridden and gone,
That he fond in a privee wone
The contree of Faerie.

Wherin he soughte North and South,
And oft he spied with his mouth
In many a forest wilde,
For in that contree n'as ther non,
That to him dorst ride or gon,
Neither wif ne childe.

Til that ther came a gret geaunt,
His name was Sire Oliphaunt,
A perilous man of dede,
He sayde, Child, by Termagaunt,
But if thou prike out of myn haunt,
Anon I slee thy stede || with mace—
Here is the Quene of Faerie,

With harpe, and pipe, and simphonie,
Dwelling in this place.

The child sayd, Al so mote I the,
To morwe wol I meten thee,
Whan I have min armoure,
And yet I hope *par ma fay*,
That thou shalt with this launcegay
Abien it ful soure; || thy mawe—
Shal I perce, if I may,
Or it be fully prime of the day,
For here thou shalt be slawe.

Sire Thopas drow abak ful fast;
This geaunt at him stones cast
Out of a fel staffe sling:
But faire escaped child Thopas,
And all it was thurgh Goddes grace,
And thurgh his faire bering.

Yet listeneth, lordings, to my tale,
Merier than the nightingale,
For now I wol you roune,
How Sire Thopas with sides smale,
Priking over hill and dale,
Is comen agein to toune.

His mery men commandeth he,
To maken him bothe game and gle,
For nedes must he fighte,
With a geaunt with hedes three,
For paramour and jolitee
Of on that shone ful brighte.

Do come, he sayd, my minestrales
And gestours for to tellen tales
Anon in min arming,
Of romaunces that ben reales,
Of popes and of cardinales,
And eke of love-longing.

They fet him first the swete win,
And mede eke in a maselin,
And real spicerie,
Of ginger-bred that was ful fin,
And licoris and eke comin,
With suger that is trie.

He didde next his white lere
Of cloth of lake fin and clere
A breche and eke a sherte,
And next his shert an haketon,

And over that an habergeon,
  For percing of his herte,

And over that a fin hauberk,
Was all ywrought of Jewes werk,
  Ful strong it was of plate,
And over that his cote-armoure,
As white as is the lily floure,
  In which he wold debate.

His sheld was all of gold so red,
And therin was a bores hed,
  A charboucle beside;
And ther he swore on ale and bred
How that the geaunt shuld be ded,
  Betide what so betide.

His jambeux were of cuirbouly,
His swerdes sheth of ivory,
  His helme of latoun bright,
His sadel was of rewel bone,
His bridel as the sonne shone,
  Or as the mone light.

His spere was of fin cypres,
That bodeth werre, and nothing pees,

The hed ful sharpe yground.
His stede was all dapple gray,
It goth an aumble in the way
Ful softely and round || in londe—
Lo, Lordes min, here is a fit;
If ye wol ony more of it,
To telle it wol I fond.

Now hold your mouth *pour charite,*
Bothe knight and lady fre,
And herkeneth to my spell,
Of bataille and of chevalrie,
Of ladies love and druerie,
Anon I wol you tell.

Men speken of romaunces of pris,
Of Hornchild, and of Ipotis,
Of Bevis, and Sire Guy,
Of Sire Libeux, and Pleindamour,
But Sire Thopas, he bereth the flour
Of real chevalrie.

His goode stede he al bestrode,
And forth upon his way he glode,
As sparcle out of bronde;
Upon his crest he bare a tour,

And therin stiked a lily flour,
God shilde his corps fro shonde.

And for he was a knight auntrous,
He n'olde slepen in non hous,
But liggen in his hood,
His brighte helm was his wanger,
And by him baited his destrer
Of herbes fin and good.

Himself drank water of the well,
As did the knight Sire Percivell
So worthy under wede,
Til on a day ——————

PROLOGUE TO MELIBEUS.

No more of this for Goddes dignitee,
Quod oure hoste, for thou makest me
So wery of thy veray lewednesse,
That al so wisly God my soule blesse,
Min eres aken of thy drafty speche.
Now swiche a rime the devil I beteche;
This may wel be rime dogerel, quod he.
Why so? quod I, why wolt thou letten me
More of my tale, than an other man,

Sin that it is the beste rime I can?
By God, quod he, for plainly at o word,
Thy drafty riming is not worth a tord:
Thou dost nought elles but dispendest time.
Sire, at o word, thou shalt no lenger rime.
Let see wher thou canst tellen ought in geste,
Or tellen in prose somwhat at the leste,
In which ther be som mirthe or som doctrine.
Gladly, quod I, by Goddes swete pine
I wol you tell a litel thing in prose,
That oughte liken you, as I suppose,
Or elles certes ye be to dangerous.
It is a moral tale vertuous,
Al be it told somtime in sondry wise
Of sondry folk, as I shal you devise.
As thus, ye wote that every Evangelist,
That telleth us the peine of Jesu Crist,
Ne saith not alle thing as his felaw doth:
But natheles hir sentence is al soth,
And alle accorden as in hir sentence,
Al be ther in hir telling difference:
For som of hem say more, and som say lesse,
Whan they his pitous passion expresse;
I mene of Mark and Mathew, Luke and John,
But douteles hir sentence is all on.
Therfore, lordinges all, I you beseche,

If that ye thinke I vary in my speche, 13882
As thus, though that I telle som del more
Of proverbes, than ye han herde before
Comprehended in this litel tretise here,
To enforcen with the effect of my matere,
And though I not the same wordes say
As ye han herde, yet to you alle I pray 13888
Blameth me not, for, as in my sentence,
Shul ye nowher finden no difference
Fro the sentence of thilke tretise lite,
After the which this mery tale I write.
And therfore herkeneth what I shal say,
And let me tellen all my tale I pray. 13894

THE TALE OF MELIBEUS.

A YONGE man called Melibeus, mighty and riche, begate upon his wif, that called was Prudence, a doughter which that called was Sophie.

Upon a day befell, that he for his disport is went into the feldes him to playe. His wif and eke his doughter hath he laft within his hous, of which the dores weren fast yshette. Foure of his olde foos han it espied, and setten ladders to the walles of his hous, and by the windowes ben entred, and beten his wif, and wounded his doughter with five

mortal woundes, in five sondry places; this is to say, in hire feet, in hire hondes, in hire eres, in hire nose, and in hire mouth; and leften hire for dede, and wenten away.

Whan Melibeus retorned was into his hous, and sey al this meschief, he, like a mad man, rending his clothes, gan to wepe and crie.

Prudence his wif, as fer forth as she dorste, besought him of his weping for to stint: but not forthy he gan to crie and wepen ever lenger the more.

This noble wif Prudence remembred hire upon the sentence of Ovide, in his book that cleped is the Remedie of love, wheras he saith; he is a fool that distourbeth the moder to wepe, in the deth of hire childe, til she have wept hire fille, as for a certain time: and than shal a man don his diligence with amiable wordes hire to reconforte and preye hire of hire weping for to stinte. For which reson this noble wif Prudence suffred hire housbond for to wepe and crie, as for a certain space; and whan she saw hire time, she sayde to him in this wise. Alas! my lord, quod she, why make ye yourself for to be like a fool? Forsothe it apperteineth not to a wise man, to maken swiche a sorwe. Youre doughter, with the grace of God, shal warish and

escape. And al were it so that she right now were dede, ye ne ought not as for hire deth youreself to destroye. Senek saith; the wise man shal not take to gret discomfort for the deth of his children, but certes he shulde suffren it in patience, as wel as he abideth the deth of his owen propre persone.

This Milibeus answered anon and saide: what man (quod he) shulde of his weping stinte, that hath so gret a cause for to wepe? Jesu Crist, our Lord, himself wepte for the deth of Lazarus his frend. Prudence answered; certes wel I wote, attempre weping is nothing defended, to him that sorweful is, among folk in sorwe, but it is rather graunted him to wepe. The Apostle Poule unto the Romaines writeth; man shal rejoyce with hem that maken joye, and wepen with swiche folk as wepen. But though attempre weping be ygranted, outrageous weping certes is defended. Mesure of weping shulde be considered, after the lore that techeth us Senek. Whan that thy frend is dede (quod he) let not thin eyen to moiste ben of teres, ne to muche drie: although the teres comen to thin eyen, let hem not falle. And whan thou hast forgon thy frend, do diligence to get agein another frend: and this is more wisdom than for to wepe for thy frend, which that thou hast lorne, for therin is no

bote. And therfore if ye governe you by sapience, put away sorwe out of youre herte. Remembreth you that Jesus Sirak sayth; a man that is joyous and glad in herte, it him conserveth florishing in his age: but sothly a sorweful herte maketh his bones drie. He saith eke thus, that sorwe in herte sleeth ful many a man. Salomon sayth, that right as mouthes in the shepes fleese anoien to the clothes, and the smale wormes to the tree, right so anoieth sorwe to the herte of man. Wherfore us ought as wel in the deth of oure children, as in the losse of oure goodes temporel, have patience.

Remembre you upon the patient Job, whan he hadde lost his children and his temporel substaunce, and in his body endured and received ful many a grevous tribulation, yet sayde he thus: Oure Lord hath yeve it to me, oure Lord hath beraft it me; right as oure Lord hath wold, right so is it don; yblessed be the name of oure Lord. To thise foresaide thinges answered Melibeus unto his wif Prudence: all thy wordes (quod he) ben trewe, and therto profitable, but trewely min herte is troubled with this sorwe so grevously, that I n'ot what to don. Let calle (quod Prudence) thyn trewe frendes alle, and thy linage, which that ben wise, and telleth to hem your cas, and herkeneth

what they saye in conseilling, and governe you after hir sentence. Salomon saith; werke all thinges by conseil, and thou shalt never repente.

Than, by conseil of his wif Prudence, this Melibeus let callen a gret congregation of folk, as surgiens, phisiciens, olde folk and yonge, and som of his olde enemies reconciled (as by hir semblant) to his love and to his grace: and therwithal ther comen some of his neigheboures, that diden him reverence more for drede than for love, as it happeth oft. Ther comen also ful many subtil flaterers, and wise Advocats lerned in the lawe.

And whan thise folk togeder assembled weren, this Melibeus in sorweful wise shewed hem his cas, and by the manere of his speche, it semed that in herte he bare a cruel ire, redy to don vengeaunce upon his foos, and sodeinly desired that the werre shulde beginne, but natheles yet axed he his conseil upon this matere. A surgien, by licence and assent of swiche as weren wise, up rose, and unto Melibeus sayde, as ye moun here.

Sire, (quod he) as to us surgiens apperteineth, that we do to every wight the beste that we can, wher as we ben withholden, and to our patient that we do no damage: wherfore it happeth many time and ofte, that whan twey men han everich wounded

other, o same surgien heleth hem both, wherfore unto our art it is not pertinent to norice werre, ne parties to supporte. But certes, as to the warishing of youre doughter, al be it so that perilously she be wounded, we shuln do so ententif besinesse fro day to night, that with the grace of God, she shal be hole and sound, as sone as is possible. Almost right in the same wise the phisiciens answerden, save that they saiden a fewe wordes more: that right as maladies ben cured by hir contraries, right so shal man warishe werre. His neigheboures ful of envie, his feined frendes that semed reconciled, and his flaterers, maden semblant of weping, and empeired and agregged muchel of this matere, in preysing gretly Melibee of might, of power, of richesse, and of frendes, despising the power of his adversaries: and saiden outrely, that he anon shulde wreken him on his foos, and beginnen werre.

Up rose than an Advocat that was wise, by leve and by conseil of other that were wise, and sayde: Lordinges, the nede for the which we ben assembled in this place, is a ful hevie thing, and an heigh matere, because of the wrong and of the wikkednesse that hath be don, and eke by reson of the grete damages, that in time coming ben possible to fallen for the same cause, and eke by reson of the gret

richesse and power of the parties bothe, for the which resons, it were a ful gret peril to erren in this matere. Wherfore, Melibeus, this is oure sentence; we conseille you, aboven alle thing, that right anon thou do thy diligence in keping of thy propre persone, in swiche a wise that thou ne want non espie ne watche, thy body for to save. And after that, we conseille that in thin hous thou sette suffisant garnison, so that they moun as wel thy body as thy hous defende. But certes for to meeven werre, ne sodenly for to do vengeaunce, we moun not deme in so litel time that it were profitable. Wherfore we axen leiser and space to have deliberation in this cas to deme; for the comune proverbe saith thus; He that sone demeth, sone shal repente. And eke men sain, that thilke juge is wise, that sone understondeth a matere, and jugeth by leiser. For al be it so, that al tarying be anoiful, algates it is not to repreve in yeving of jugement, ne in vengeance taking, whan it is suffisant and resonable. And that shewed our Lord Jesu Crist by ensample, for whan that the woman that was taken in advoutrie, was brought in his presence to knowen what shuld be don with hire persone, al be it that he wist wel himself what that he wolde answere, yet ne wolde he not answere sodeinly, but he wolde have deli-

beration, and in the ground he wrote twies; and by thise causes we axen deliberation: and we shuln than by the grace of God conseille the thing that shal be profitable.

Up sterte than the yonge folk at ones, and the most partie of that compagnie han scorned this olde wise man, and begonnen to make noise and saiden; Right so as while that iren is hot men shulde smite, right so men shuln do wreken hir wronges, while that they ben freshe and newe: and with loude voys they criden werre, werre. Up rose tho on of thise olde wise, and with his hand made countenaunce that men shuld holde hem stille, and yeve him audience. Lordinges, (quod he) ther is ful many a man that crieth werre, werre, that wote ful litel what werre amounteth. Werre at his beginning hath so gret an entring and so large, that every wight may enter whan him liketh, and lightly find werre: but certes what end that shal befalle, it is not light to know. For sothly whan that werre is ones begonne, ther is ful many a child unborne of his moder, that shal sterve yong, by cause of thilke werre, other elles live in sorwe, and dien in wretchednesse: and therfore or that any werre be begonne, men must have gret conseil and gret deliberation. And whan this olde man wende to enforcen his tale

by resons, wel nie alle at ones begonne they to rise, for to breken his tale, and bidden him ful oft his wordes for to abregge. For sothly he that precheth to hem that listen not heren his wordes, his sermon hem anoieth. For Jesus Sirak sayth, that musike in weping is a noious thing. This is to sayn, as muche availleth to speke beforn folk to which his speche anoieth, as to singe beforne him that wepeth. And whan this wise man saw that him wanted audience, al shamefast he sette him doun agein. For Salomon saith: ther as thou ne mayst have non audience, enforce thee not to speke. I see wel, (quod this wise man) that the comune proverbe is soth, that good conseil wanteth, whan it is most nede.

Yet had this Melibeus in his conseil many folk, that prively in his ere conseilled him certain thing, and conseilled him the contrary in general audience. Whan Melibeus had herd that the gretest partie of his conseil were accorded that he shulde make werre, anon he consented to hire conseilling, and fully affermed hir sentence. Than dame Prudence, whan that she saw how that hire hosbonde shope him for to awreke him on his foos, and to beginne werre, she in ful humble wise, whan she saw hire time, sayde him these wordes: my lord, (quod she)

I you beseche as hertly as I dare and can, ne haste you not to faste, and for alle guerdons as yeve me audience. For Piers Alphonse sayth; who so that doth to thee outher good or harme, haste thee not to quite it, for in this wise thy frend wol abide, and thin enemie shal the lenger live in drede. The proverbe sayth; he hasteth wel that wisely can abide: and in wikked hast is no profite.

This Melibee answered unto his wif Prudence: I purpose not (quod he) to werken by thy conseil, for many causes and resons: for certes every wight wold hold me than a fool; this is to sayn, if I for thy conseilling wolde change thinges, that ben ordeined and affirmed by so many wise men. Secondly, I say, that all women ben wicke, and non good of hem all. For of a thousand men, saith Salomon, I found o good man: but certes of alle womnen good woman found I never. And also certes, if I governed me by thy conseil, it shulde seme that I had yeve thee over me the maistrie: and God forbede that it so were. For Jesus Sirak sayth, that if the wif have the maistrie, she is contrarious to hire husbond. And Salomon sayth; never in thy lif to thy wif, ne to thy childe, ne to thy frend, ne yeve no power over thy self: for better it were that thy children axe of thee thinges that hem nedeth,

than thou see thy self in the handes of thy children. And also if I wol werche by thy conseilling, certes it must be somtime secree, til it were time that it be knowen: and this ne may not be, if I shulde be conseilled by thee. [For it is written; the janglerie of women ne can no thing hide, save that which they wote not. After the Philosophre sayth; in wikked conseil women venquishen men: and for thise resons I ne owe not to be conseilled by thee.]

Whan dame Prudence, ful debonairly and with gret pacience, had herd all that hire husbonde liked for to say, than axed she of him licence for to speke, and sayde in this wise. My lord, (quod she) as to your first reson, it may lightly ben answerd: for I say that it is no folie to chaunge conseil whan the thing is chaunged, or elles whan the thing semeth otherwise than it semed afore. And moreover I say, though that ye have sworne and behight to performe your emprise, and nevertheles ye weive to performe thilke same emprise by just cause, men shuld not say therfore ye were a lyer, ne forsworn: for the book sayth, that the wise man maketh no lesing, whan he turneth his corage for the better. And al be it that your emprise be established and ordeined by gret multitude of folk, yet thar you not accomplish thilke ordinance but

you liketh: for the trouthe of thinges, and the profit, ben rather founden in fewe folk that ben wise and ful of reson, than by gret multitude of folk, ther every man cryeth and clattereth what him liketh: sothly swiche multitude is not honest. As to the second reson, wheras ye say, that alle women ben wicke: save your grace, certes ye despise alle women in this wise, and he that all despiseth, as saith the book, all displeseth. And Senek saith, that who so wol have sapience, shal no man dispreise, but he shal gladly teche the science that he can, without presumption or pride: and swiche thinges as he nought can, he shal not ben ashamed to lere hem, and to enquere of lesse folk than himself. And, Sire, that ther hath ben ful many a good woman, may lightly be preved: for certes, Sire, our Lord Jesu Crist n'olde never han descended to be borne of a woman, if all women had be wicked. And after that, for the gret bountee that is in women, our Lord Jesu Crist, whan he was risen from deth to lif, appered rather to a woman than to his Apostles. And though that Salomon sayde, he found never no good woman, it folweth not therfore, that all women be wicked: for though that he ne found no good woman, certes many another man hath founde many a woman ful good and

trewe. Or elles peraventure the entent of Salomon was this, that in soveraine bountee he found no woman; this is to say, that ther is no wight that hath soveraine bountee, save God alone, as he himself recordeth in his Evangelies. For ther is no creature so good, that him ne wanteth somwhat of the perfection of God that is his maker. Youre thridde reson is this; ye say that if that ye governe you by my conseil, it shulde seme that ye had yeve me the maistrie and the lordship of your person. Sire, save your grace, it is not so; for if so were that no man shulde be conseilled but only of hem that han lordship and maistrie of his person, men n'olde not be conseilled so often: for sothly thilke man that asketh conseil of a purpos, yet hath he free chois whether he wol werke after that conseil or non. And as to your fourth reson, ther as ye sain that the janglerie of women can hide thinges that they wot not; as who so sayth, that a woman can not hide that she wote; Sire, thise wordes ben understonde of women that ben jangleresses and wicked; of which women men sain that three thinges driven a man out of his hous, that is to say, smoke, dropping of raine, and wicked wives. And of swiche women Salomon sayth, That a man were better dwell in desert, than with a wo-

man that is riotous. And, sire, by your leve, that am not I; for ye have ful often assaied my gret silence and my gret patience, and eke how wel that I can hide and hele thinges, that men oughten secretly to hiden. And sothly as to your fifthe reson, wheras ye say, that in wicked conseil women venquishen men; God wote that thilke reson stant here in no stede: for understondeth now, ye axen conseil for to do wickednesse; and if ye wol werken wickednesse, and your wif restraineth thilke wicked purpos, and overcometh you by reson and by good conseil, certes your wif ought rather to be preised than to be blamed. Thus shulde ye understonde the philosophre that sayth, In wicked conseil women venquishen hir husbondes. And ther as ye blamen all women and hir resons, I shal shewe you by many ensamples, that many women have ben ful good, and yet ben, and hir conseil holesome and profitable. Eke som men han sayd, that the conseil of women is either to dere, or elles to litel of pris. But al be it so that ful many a woman be bad, and hire conseil vile and nought worth, yet han men founden ful many a good woman, and discrete and wise in conseilling. Lo, Jacob, thurgh the good conseil of his mother Rebecke, wan the benison of his father, and the lordship over all his

brethren. Judith, by hire good conseil, delivered the citee of Bethulie, in which she dwelt, out of the honde of Holofern, that had it beseged, and wolde it al destroye. Abigail delivered Nabal hire housbond fro David the king, that wolde han slain him, and appesed the ire of the king by hire wit, and by hire good conseilling. Hester by hire conseil enhaunced gretly the peple of God, in the regne of Assuerus the king. And the same bountee in good conseilling of many a good woman moun men rede and tell. And further more, whan that oure Lord had created Adam oure forme father, he sayd in this wise; it is not good to be a man allone: make we to him an helpe semblable to himself. Here moun ye see that if women weren not good, and hir conseil good and profitable, oure Lord God of heven wolde neither han wrought hem, ne called hem helpe of man, but rather confusion of man. And ther sayd a clerk ones in two vers; what is better than gold? Jaspre. What is better than jaspre? Wisdom. And what is better than wisdom? Woman. And what is better than a good woman? Nothing. And, Sire, by many other resons moun ye seen, that many women ben good, and hir conseil good and profitable. And therfore, Sire, if ye wol troste to my conseil, I shal restore you your doughter

hole and sound: and I wol don to you so muche, that ye shuln have honour in this cas.

Whan Melibee had herd the wordes of his wif Prudence, he sayd thus: I se wel that the word of Salomon is soth; for he saith, that wordes, that ben spoken discretly by ordinaunce, ben honie-combes, for they yeven swetenesse to the soule, and holsomnesse to the body. And, wif, because of thy swete wordes, and eke for I have preved and assaied thy grete sapience and thy grete trouthe, I wol governe me by thy conseil in alle thing.

Now, Sire, (quod dame Prudence) and sin that ye vouchesafe to be governed by my conseil, I wol enforme you how that ye shuln governe yourself, in chesing of youre conseillours. Ye shuln first in alle your werkes mekely besechen to the heigh God, that he wol be your conseillour: and shapeth you to swiche entente that he yeve you conseil and comforte, as taught Tobie his sone; at alle times thou shalt blesse God, and preie him to dresse thy wayes; and loke that alle thy conseils ben in him for evermore. Seint James eke sayth; if any of you have nede of sapience, axe it of God. And afterwarde, than shullen ye take conseil in your-self, and examine wel your owen thoughtes, of swiche thinges as you thinketh that ben best for

your profit. And than shuln ye drive fro your herte three thinges that ben contrarious to good conseil; that is to sayn, ire, coveitise, and hastinesse.

First, he that axeth conseil of himself, certes he must be withouten ire, for many causes. The first is this: he that hath gret ire and wrath in himself, he weneth alway that he may do thing that he may not do. And secondly, he that is irous and wroth, he may not wel deme: and he that may not wel deme, may not wel conseille. The thridde is this; he that is irous and wroth, as sayth Senek, ne may not speke but blameful thinges, and with his vicious wordes he stirreth other folk to anger and to ire. And eke, Sire, ye must drive coveitise out of your herte. For the Apostle sayth, that coveitise is the rote of alle harmes. And trosteth wel, that a coveitous man ne can not deme ne thinke, but only to fulfille the ende of his coveitise; and certes that ne may never ben accomplised; for ever the more haboundance that he hath of richesse, the more he desireth. And, Sire, ye must also drive out of youre herte hastinesse: for certes ye ne moun not deme for the beste a soden thought that falleth in youre herte, but ye must avise you on it ful ofte: for as ye have herde herebeforn, the com-

mune proverbe is this; he that sone demeth, sone repenteth.

Sire, ye ne be not alway in like disposition, for certes som thing that somtime semeth to you that it is good for to do, another time it semeth to you the contrarie.

And whan ye han taken conseil in yourself, and han demed by good deliberation swiche thing as you semeth beste, than rede I you that ye kepe it secree. Bewreye not your conseil to no persone, but if so be that ye wenen sikerly, that thurgh youre bewreying youre condition shal ben to you more profitable. For Jesus Sirak saith: neither to thy foo ne to thy frend discover not thy secree, ne thy folie: for they woln yeve you audience and loking, and supportation in youre presence, and scorne you in youre absence. Another clerk sayth, that scarsly shalt thou finden any persone that may kepe thy conseil secrely. The book sayth; while that thou kepest thy conseil in thin herte, thou kepest it in thy prison: and whan thou bewreyest thy conseil to any wight, he holdeth thee in his snare. And therfore you is better to hide your conseil in your herte, than to preye him to whom ye han bewreyed youre conseil, that he wol kepe it close and stille. For Seneca sayth: if so be that

thou ne mayst not thin owen conseil hide, how darest thou preyen any other wight thy conseil secrely to kepe? but natheles, if thou wene sikerly that thy bewreying of thy conseil to a persone wol make thy condition to stonden in the better plight, than shalt thou telle him thy conseil in this wise. First, thou shalt make no semblant whether thee were lever pees or werre, or this or that; ne shewe him not thy will ne thin entente: for troste wel that communly these conseillours ben flaterers, namely the conseillours of grete lordes, for they enforcen hem alway rather to speken plesant wordes enclining to the lordes lust, than wordes that ben trewe or profitable: and therfore men sayn, that the riche man hath selde good conseil, but if he have it of himself. And after that thou shalt consider thy frendes and thin enemies. And as touching thy frendes, thou shalt consider which of hem ben most feithful and most wise, and eldest and most appreved in conseilling: and of hem shalt thou axe thy conseil, as the cas requireth.

I say, that first ye shuln clepe to youre conseil youre frendes that ben trewe. For Salomon saith: that right as the herte of a man déliteth in savour that is swote, right so the conseil of trewe frendes yeveth swetenesse to the soule. He sayth also,

ther may nothing be likened to the trewe frend: for certes gold ne silver ben not so muche worth as the good will of a trewe frend. And eke he sayth, that a trewe frend is a strong defence; who so that it findeth, certes he findeth a gret tresor. Than shuln ye eke consider if that your trewe frendes ben discrete and wise: for the book saith, axe alway thy conseil of hem that ben wise. And by this same reson shuln ye clepen to youre conseil youre frendes that ben of age, swiche as han seyn and ben expert in many thinges, and ben appreved in conseillinges. For the book sayth, in olde men is al the sapience, and in longe time the prudence. And Tullius sayth, that grete thinges ne ben not ay accomplised by strengthe, ne by delivernesse of body, but by good conseil, by auctoritee of persones, and by science: the which three thinges ne ben not feble by age, but certes they enforcen and encresen day by day. And than shuln ye kepe this for a general reule. First ye shuln clepe to youre conseil a fewe of youre frendes that ben especial. For Salomon saith; many frendes have thou, but among a thousand chese thee on to be thy conseillour. For al be it so, that thou first ne telle thy conseil but to a fewe, thou mayest afterwarde tell it to mo folk, if it be nede. But loke alway

that thy conseillours have thilke three conditions that I have sayd before; that is to say, that they be trewe, wise, and of olde experience. And werke not alway in every nede by on conseillour allone: for somtime behoveth it to be conseilled by many. For Salomon sayth; salvation of thinges is wher as ther ben many conseillours.

Now sith that I have told you of which folk ye shulde be conseilled: now wol I teche you which conseil ye ought to eschue. First ye shuln eschue the conseilling of fooles; for Salomon sayth, Take no conseil of a fool: for he ne can not conseille but after his owen lust and his affection. The book sayth, the propretee of a fool is this: He troweth lightly harme of every man, and lightly troweth all bountee in himself. Thou shalt eke eschue the conseilling of all flaterers, swiche as enforcen hem rather to preisen youre persone by flaterie, than for to tell you the sothfastnesse of thinges.

Wherfore Tullius sayth, Among alle the pestilences that ben in frendship, the gretest is flaterie. And therfore it is more nede that thou eschue and drede flaterers, than any other peple. The book saith, Thou shalt rather drede and flee fro the swete wordes of flatering preisers, than fro the egre wordes of thy frend that saith thee sothes. Salo-

ıon saith, that the wordes of a flaterer is a snare ɔ cacchen innocentes. He sayth also, He that peketh to his frend wordes of swetenesse and of lesaunce, he setteth a net beforne his feet to cachen him. And therfore sayth Tullius, Encline not hin eres to flaterers, ne take no conseil of wordes of laterie. And Caton sayth, Avise thee wel, and schue wordes of swetenesse and of plesaunce. And ke thou shalt eschue the conseilling of thin olde nemies that ben reconciled. The book sayth, that o wight retourneth safely into the grace of his olde nemie. And Ysope sayth, Ne trost not to hem, ɔ which thou hast somtime had werre or enmitee, e telle hem not thy conseil. And Senek telleth he cause why. It may not be, sayth he, ther as gret re hath long time endured, that ther ne dwelleth om vapour of warmnesse. And therfore saith alomon, In thin olde foo trost thou never. For ikerly, though thin enemie be reconciled, and aketh thee chere of humilitee, and louteth to thee ith his hed, ne trost him never: for certes he aketh thilke feined humilitee more for his profite, an for any love of thy persone; because that he emeth to have victorie over thy persone by swiche ined contenance, the which victorie he might not ave by strif of werre. And Peter Alphonse sayth;

Make no felawship with thin olde enemies, for if thou do hem bountee, they wollen perverten it to wickednesse. And eke thou must eschue the conseilling of hem that ben thy servaunts, and beren thee gret reverence: for paraventure they fein it more for drede than for love. And therfore saith a philosophre in this wise: Ther is no wight parfitly trewe to him that he to sore dredeth. And Tullius sayth, Ther n'is no might so gret of any emperour that longe may endure, but if he have more love of the peple than drede. Thou shalt also eschue the conseilling of folk that ben dronkelewe, for they ne can no conseil hide. For Salomon sayth, Ther n'is no privetee ther as regneth dronkennesse. Ye shuln also have in suspect the conseilling of swiche folk as conseille you o thing prively, and conseille you the contrarie openly. For Cassiodore sayth, That it is a manere sleighte to hinder his enemy whan he sheweth to don a thing openly, and werketh prively the contrary. Thou shalt also have in suspect the conseilling of wicked folk, for hir conseil is alway ful of fraude. And David sayth; Blisful is that man that hath not folwed the conseilling of shrewes. Thou shalt also eschue the conseilling of yonge folk, for hir conseilling is not ripe, as Salomon saith.

Now, Sire, sith I have shewed you of which folk

ye shullen take youre conseil, and of which folk ye shullen eschue the conseil, now wol I teche you how ye shuln examine your conseil after the doctrine of Tullius. In examining than of your conseillours, ye shuln considre many thinges. Alderfirst thou shalt considre that in thilke thing that thou purposest, and upon what thing that thou wolt have conseil, that veray trouthe be said and conserved; this is to say, telle trewely thy tale: for he that sayth false, may not wel be conseilled in that cas, of which he lieth. And after this, thou shalt considre the thinges that accorden to that thou purposest for to do by thy conseillours, if reson accord therto, and eke if thy might may atteine therto, and if the more part and the better part of thin conseillours accorden therto or no. Than shalt thou considre what thing shal folwe of that conseilling; as hate, pees, werre, grace, profite, or domage, and many other thinges: and in alle thinges thou shalt chese the beste, and weive alle other thinges. Than shalt thou considre of what roote is engendred the matere of thy conseil, and what fruit it may conceive and engendre. Thou shalt eke considre alle the causes, from whennes they ben sprongen. And whan thou hast examined thy conseil, as I have said, and which partie is the

better and more profitable, and hast appreved it by many wise folk and olde, than shalt thou considre, if thou mayst performe it and maken of it a good ende. For certes reson wol not that any man shulde beginne a thing, but if he mighte performe it as him oughte: ne no wight shulde take upon him so hevy a charge, that he might not beren it. For the proverbe sayth; he that to muche embraceth distreineth litel. And Caton saith; assay to do swiche thinges as thou hast power to don, lest the charge oppresse thee so sore, that thee behoveth to weive thing that thou hast begonne. And if so be that thou be in doute, whether thou mayst performe a thing or non, chese rather to suffre than to beginne. And Peter Alphonse sayth; If thou hast might to don a thing, of which thou must repente, it is better nay than ya: this is to sayn, that thee is better to holde thy tonge stille than for to speke. Than mayst thou understonde by stronger resons, that if thou hast power to performe a werk, of which thou shalt repente, than is thee better that thou suffre than beginne. Wel sain they that defenden every wight to assaye a thing of which he is in doute, whether he may performe it or non. And after whan ye han examined youre conseil, as I have said beforne, and knowen

wel that ye moun performe your emprise, conferme it than sadly til it be at an ende.

Now is it reson and time that I shewe you whan, and wherfore, that ye moun chaunge your conseil, withouten repreve. Sothly, a man may change his purpos and his conseil, if the cause ceseth, or whan a newe cas betideth. For the lawe saith, that upon thinges that newly betiden, behoveth newe conseil. And Seneca sayth; if thy conseil is comen to the eres of thin enemies, chaunge thy conseil. Thou mayst also chaunge thy conseil, if so be that thou find that by erroùr, or by other cause, harme or damage may betide. Also if thy conseil be dishoneste, other elles come of dishoneste cause, chaunge thy conseil: for the lawes sain, that all behestes that ben dishoneste ben of no value: and eke, if so be that it be impossible, or may not goodly be performed or kept.

And take this for a general reule, that every conseil that is affermed so strongly, that it may not be chaunged for no condition that may betide, I say that thilke conseil is wicked.

This Melibeus, whan he had herd the doctrine of his wif dame Prudence, answered in this wise. Dame, quod he, as yet unto this time ye han wel and covenably taught me, as in general, how I shal

governe me in the chesing and in the withholding of my conseillours: but now wold I fain that ye wold condescend in especial, and telle me how liketh you, or what semeth you by oure conseillours that we han chosen in oure present nede.

My lord, quod she, I beseche you in alle humblesse, that ye wol not wilfully replie agein my resons, ne distempre your herte, though I speke thing that you displese; for God wote that, as in min entente, I speke it for your beste, for youre honour and for youre profite eke, and sothly I hope that youre benignitee wol taken it in patience. And trosteth me wel, quod she, that youre conseil as in this cas ne shulde not (as to speke proprely) be called a conseilling, but a motion or a meving of folie, in which conseil ye han erred in many a sondry wise.

First and forward, ye han erred in the assembling of youre conseillours: for ye sholde first han cleped a fewe folk to youre conseil, and after ye mighte han shewed it to mo folk, if it hadde be nede. But certes ye han sodeinly cleped to your conseil a gret multitude of peple, ful chargeant and ful anoyous for to here. Also ye han erred, for ther as ye shulde han only cleped to youre conseile youre trewe frendes, olde and wise, ye han cleped straunge

folk, yonge folk, false flaterers, and enemies reconciled, and folk that don you reverence withouten love. And eke ye han erred, for ye han brought with you to youre conseil ire, coveitise, and hastifnesse, the which three thinges ben contrary to every conseil honest and profitable: the which three thinges ye ne han not anientissed or destroyed, neither in youreself ne in youre conseillours, as you ought. Ye han erred also, for ye han shewed to youre conseillours youre talent and youre affections to make werre anon, and for to do vengeaunce, and they han espied by youre wordes to what thing ye ben enclined: and therfore han they conseilled you rather to youre talent, than to youre profite. Ye han erred also, for it semeth that you sufficeth to han ben conseilled by thise conseillours only, and with litel avis, wheras in so high and so gret a nede, it had ben necessarie mo conseillours, and more deliberation to performe your emprise. Ye han erred also, for ye han not examined your conseil in the foresaid manere, ne in due manere, as the cas requireth. Ye han erred also, for ye han maked no division betwix youre conseillours; this is to sayn, betwix youre trewe frendes and youre feined conseillours: ne ye han not knowe the wille of your trewe frendes, olde and wise, but ye han cast alle

hir wordes in an hochepot, and enclined your herte to the more part and to the greter nombre, and ther be ye condescended; and sith ye wot wel that men shuln alway finde a greter nombre of fooles than of wise men, and therfore the conseillings that ben at congregations and multitudes of folk, ther as men take more regard to the nombre, than to the sapience of persones, ye seen wel, that in swiche conseillings fooles han the maistrie. Melibeus answered and said agein: I graunte wel that I have erred; but ther as thou hast told me herebeforne, that he n'is not to blame that chaungeth his conseil in certain cas, and for certain and just causes, I am al redy to chaunge my conseil right as thou wolt devise. The proverbe sayth; for to don sinne is mannish, but certes for to persevere long in sinne is werke of the Divel.

To this sentence answered anon dame Prudence, and saide; examineth (quod she) wel your conseil, and let us see the which of hem han spoken most resonably, and taught you best conseil. And for as muche as the examination is necessarie, let us beginne at the Surgiens and at the Physiciens, that first spaken in this mater. I say that Physiciens and Surgiens han sayde you in youre conseil discretly, as hem oughte: and in hir speche saiden ful

wisely, that to the office of hem apperteineth to don to every wight honour and profite, and no wight to anoye, and after hir craft to don gret diligence unto the cure of hem which that they han in hir governaunce. And, Sire, right as they han answered wisely and discretly, right so rede I that they be highly and soverainly guerdoned for hir noble speche, and eke for they shulden do the more ententif besinesse in the curation of thy dere doughter. For al be it so that they ben youre frendes, therfore shullen ye not suffren, that they serve you for nought, but ye oughte the rather guerdone hem, and shewe hem youre largesse. And as touching the proposition, which the Physiciens entreteden in this cas, this is to sain, that in maladies, that a contrarie is warished by another contrarie; I wold fain knowe how ye understonde thilke text, and what is youre sentence. Certes, quod Melibeus, I understond it in this wise; that right as they han don me a contrarie, right so shulde I don hem another; for right as they han venged hem upon me and don me wrong, right so shal I venge me upon hem, and don hem wrong, and than have I cured a contrarie by another.

Lo, lo, quod dame Prudence, how lightly is every man enclined to his owen desire and his owen

plesaunce! certes (quod she) the wordes of the Physiciens ne shulden not han ben understonden in that wise; for certes wickednesse is not contrarie to wickednesse, ne vengeaunce to vengeaunce, ne wrong to wrong, but they ben semblable: and therfore a vengeaunce is not warished by another vengeaunce, ne a wrong by another wrong, but everich of hem encreseth and aggreggeth other. But certes the wordes of the Physiciens shulden ben understonde in this wise; for good and wickednesse ben two contraries, and pees and werre, vengeaunce and suffraunce, discord and accord, and many other thinges: but certes, wickednesse shal be warished by goodnesse, discord by accord, werre by pees, and so forth of other thinges. And hereto acoordeth Seint Poule the Apostle in many places: he sayth, ne yelde not harme for harme, ne wicked speche for wicked speche, but do wel to him that doth to thee harme, and blesse him that saith to thee harme. And in many other places he amonesteth pees and accord. But now wol I speke to you of the conseil, which that was yeven to you by the men of lawe, and the wise folk, and old folke, that sayden alle by on accord as ye han herd beforne, that over alle thinges ye shuln do youre diligence to kepe youre persone, and to warnestore

your house: and saiden also, that in this cas you oughte for to werchen ful avisely and with gret deliberation. And, Sire, as to the first point, that toucheth the keping of youre persone, ye shuln understond, that he that hath werre, shal ever more devoutly and mekely preien beforne alle thinges, that Jesu Crist of his mercie wol han him in his protection, and ben his soveraine helping at his nede: for certes in this world ther is no wight that may be conseilled ne kept suffisantly, withoute the keping of oure lord Jesu Crist. To this sentence accordeth the Prophete David that sayth: if God ne kepe the citee, in idel waketh he that kepeth it. Now, Sire, than shuln ye committe the keping of youre persone to youre trewe frendes, that ben appreved and yknowe, and of hem shuln ye axen helpe, youre persone for to kepe. For Caton saith: if thou have nede of helpe, axe it of thy frendes, for ther n'is non so good a Physicien as thy trewe frend. And after this than shuln ye kepe you fro alle straunge folk, and fro lieres, and have alway in suspect hir compaignie. For Piers Alphonse sayth: ne take no compaignie by the way of a straunge man, but if so be that thou have knowen him of lenger time: and if so be that he falle into

thy compaignie paraventure withouten thin assent, enquere than, as subtilly as thou maist, of his conversation, and of his lif beforne, and feine thy way, saying thou wolt go thider as thou wolt not go: and if he bere a spere, hold thee on the right side, and if he bere a swerd, hold thee on his left side. And after this than shuln ye kepe you wisely from all swiche manere peple as I have sayed before, and hem and hir conseil eschue. And after this than shuln ye kepe you in swiche manere, that for any presumption of youre strengthe, that ye ne despise not, ne account not the might of your adversary so lite, that ye let the keping of youre persone for your presumption; for every wise man dredeth his enemie. And Salomon sayth; welful is he that of alle hath drede; For certes he that thurgh the hardinesse of his herte, and thurgh the hardinesse of himself, hath to gret presumption, him shal evil betide. Than shuln ye evermo countrewaite emboyssements, and alle espiaile. For Senek sayth, that the wise man that dredeth harmes, eschueth harmes; ne he ne falleth into perils, that perils eschueth. And al be it so, that it seme that thou art in siker place, yet shalt thou alway do thy diligence in keping of thy persone; this is to sayn,

ne be not negligent to kepe thin persone, not only fro thy gretest enemy, but also fro thy leste enemy. Senek sayth; a man that is wel avised, he dredeth his leste enemie. Ovide sayth, that the litel wesel wol slee the gret boll and the wilde hart. And the book sayth; a litel thorne may prikke a king ful sore, and a litel hound wol hold the wilde bore. But natheles, I say not thou shalt be so coward, that thou doute wher as is no drede. The book saith, that som men [han taught hir deceivour, for they han to muche dreded] to be deceived. Yet shalt thou drede to be empoysoned; and [therfore shalt thou] kepe thee fro the compagnie of scorners: for the book sayth, with scorners ne make no compagnie, but flee hir wordes as venime.

Now as to the second point, wheras youre wise conseillours conseilled you to warnestore your hous with gret diligence, I wolde fain knowe how that ye understode thilke wordes, and what is youre sentence.

Melibeus answered and saide; Certes I understond it in this wise, that I shal warnestore min hous with toures, swiche as han castelles and other manere edifices, and armure, and artelries, by which thinges I may my persone and myn hous so kepen

and defenden, that min enemies shuln ben in drede min hous for to approche.

To this sentence answered anon Prudence. Warnestoring (quod she) of heighe toures and of grete edifices, is with grete costages and with grete travaille; and whan that they ben accompliced, yet ben they not worth a stre, but if they ben defended by trewe frendes, that ben olde and wise. And understonde wel, that the greteste and strongeste garneson that a riche man may have, as wel to kepen his persone as his goodes, is, that he be beloved with his subgets, and with his neigheboures. For thus sayth Tullius, that ther is a maner garneson, that no man may venquish ne discomfite, and that is a lord to be beloved of his citizeins, and of his peple.

Now, Sire, as to the thridde point, wheras youre olde and wise conseillours sayden, that you ne oughte not sodeinly ne hastily proceden in this nede, but that you oughte purveyen and appareilen you in this cas, with gret diligence and gret deliberation; trewely, I trowe, that they sayden right wisely and right soth. For Tullius sayth: in every nede er thou beginne it, appareile thee with gret diligence. Than say I, that in vengeaunce

taking, in werre, in bataille, and in warnestoring, er thou beginne, I rede that thou appareile thee therto, and do it with gret deliberation. For Tullius sayth, that longe appareiling tofore the bataille, maketh short victorie. And Cassiodorus sayth: the garneson is stronger, whan it is longe time avised.

But now let us speken of the conseil that was accorded by youre neigheboures, swiche as don you reverence withouten love; youre olde enemies reconciled; your flatereres, that conseilled you certain thinges prively, and openly conseilled you the contrarie; the yonge folk also, that conseilled you to venge you, and to make werre anon. Certes, Sire, as I have sayde beforne, ye han gretly erred to han cleped swiche maner folk to youre conseil, which conseillours ben ynough reproved by the resons aforesaid. But natheles, let us now descende to the special. Ye shul first proceden after the doctrine of Tullius. Certes the trouthe of this matere or of this conseil nedeth not diligently to enquere, for it is wel wist, which they ben that han don to you this trespas and vilanie, and how many trespasours, and in what manere they han don to you all this wrong, and all this vilanie. And

after this, than shuln ye examine the second condition, which that the same Tullius addeth in this matere. For Tullius putteth a thing, which that he clepeth consenting: this is to sayn, who ben they, and which ben they, and how many, that consenten to thy conseil in thy wilfulnesse, to don hastif vengeaunce. And let us considre also who ben they, and how many ben they, and which ben they, that consenteden to youre adversaries. As to the first point, it is wel knowen which folk they be that consenteden to youre wilfulnesse. For trewely, all tho that conseileden you to maken sodein werre, ne ben not youre frendes. Let us now considre which ben they that ye holden so gretly youre frendes, as to youre persone: for al be it so that ye be mighty and riche, certes ye ne ben but allone: for certes ye ne han no child but a doughter, ne ye ne han no brethren, ne cosins germains, ne non other nigh kinrede, wherfore that youre enemies for drede shulde stinte to plede with you, or to destroye youre persone. Ye knowen also, that your richesses moten ben dispended in diverse parties; and whan that every wight hath his part, they ne wollen taken but litel regard to venge youre deth. But thin enemies ben three, and they han many

brethren, children, cosins, and other nigh kinrede: and though so were, that thou haddest slain of hem two or three, yet dwellen ther ynow to wreken hir deth, and to slee thy persone. And though so be that youre kinrede be more stedefast and siker than the kin of your adversaries, yet natheles youre kinrede is but a fer kinrede; they ben but litel sibbe to you, and the kin of youre enemies ben nigh sibbe to hem. And certes as in that, hir condition is better than youres. Than let us considre also of the conseilling of hem that conseilled you to take sodein vengeance, whether it accorde to reson: and certes, ye knowe wel, nay; for as by right and reson, ther may no man taken vengeaunce on no wight, but the juge that hath the jurisdiction of it, whan it is ygraunted him to take thilke vengeaunce hastily, or attemprely, as the lawe requireth. And yet moreover of thilke word that Tullius clepeth consenting, thou shalt considre, if thy might and thy power may consente and suffice to thy wilfulnesse, and to thy conseillours: and certes, thou mayest wel say, that nay; for sikerly, as for to speke proprely, we moun do nothing but only swiche thing as we moun don rightfully: and certes rightfully ye ne mowe take no vengeance, as of your propre auctoritee. Than

mowe ye sen that your power ne consenteth not, ne accordeth not to youre wilfulnesse. Now let us examine the thridde point, that Tullius clepeth consequent. Thou shalt understonde, that the vengeaunce that thou purposest for to take, is the consequent, and therof folweth another vengeance, peril, and werre, and other damages withouten nombre, of which we ben not ware, as at this time. And as touching the fourthe point, that Tullius clepeth engendring, thou shalt consider, that this wrong which that is don to thee, is engendred of the hate of thin enemies, and of the vengeaunce taking upon that wold engender another vengeaunce, and muchel sorwe and wasting of richesses, as I sayde ere.

Now, sire, as to the point, that Tullius clepeth causes, which that is the last point, thou shalt understonde, that the wrong that thou hast received, hath certaine causes, which that clerkes clepen *oriens*, and *efficiens*, and *causa longinqua*, and *causa propinqua*, this is to sayn, the fer cause, and the nigh cause. The fer cause is almighty God, that is cause of alle thinges: the ner cause, is thin three enemies; the cause accidental was hate; the cause material, ben the five woundes of thy doughter; the cause formal, is the maner of hir werking, that

broughten ladders, and clombeu in at thy windowes; the cause final was for to slee thy doughter; it letted not in as muche as in hem was. But for to speke of the fer cause, as to what ende they shuln come, or what shal finally betide of hem in this cas, ne can I not deme, but by conjecting and supposing: for we shuln suppose, that they shuln come to a wicked ende, because that the book of Decrees sayth: Selden or with gret peine ben causes ybrought to a good ende, whan they ben badly begonne.

Now, Sire, if men wold axen me, why that God suffred men to do you this vilanie, certes I can not wel answer, as for no sothfastnesse. For the Apostle sayth, that the sciences, and the jugements of oure Lord God Almighty ben ful depe; ther may no man comprehend ne serche hem suffisantly. Natheles, by certain presumptions and conjectings, I hold and beleve, that God, which that is ful of justice and of rightwisenesse, hath suffered this betide, by just cause resonable.

Thy name is Melibee, this is to sayn, a man that drinketh hony. Thou hast dronke so muche hony of swete temporel richesses, and delices, and honours of this world, that thou art dronken, and hast forgetten Jesu Crist thy creatour: thou ne hast not

don to him swiche honour and reverence as thee ought, ne thou ne hast wel ytaken kepe to the wordes of Ovide, that sayth: Under the honey of the goodes of thy body is hid the venime that sleth the soule. And Salomon sayth: If thou hast founden hony, ete of it that sufficeth; for if thou ete of it out of measure, thou shalt spewe, and be nedy and poure. And peraventure Crist hath thee in despit, and hath tourned away fro thee his face, and his eres of misericorde; and also he hath suffred, that thou hast ben punished in the manere that thou hast ytrespased. Thou hast don sinne again oure Lord Crist, for certes the three enemies of mankind, that is to sayn, the flesh, the fend, and the world, thou hast suffred hem entre into thin herte wilfully, by the windowes of thy body, and hast not defended thyself suffisantly agein hir assautes, and hir temptations, so that they han wounded thy soule in five places, this is to sayn the dedly sinnes that ben entred into thyn herte by thy five wittes: and in the same manere our Lord Crist hath wold and suffred, that thy three enemies ben entred into thyn hous by the windowes, and han ywounded thy doughter in the foresayd manere.

Certes, quod Melibee, I see wel that ye enforce you muchel by wordes to overcomen me, in swiche

manere, that I shal not venge me on mine enemies, shewing me the perils and the evils that mighten falle of this vengeaunce: but who so wolde considre in alle vengeaunces the perils and evils that mighten sue of vengeaunce taking, a man wold never take vengeaunce, and that were harme: for by the vengeaunce taking ben the wicked men dissevered fro the goode men. And they that han will to do wickednesse, restreinen hir wicked purpos, whan they sen the punishing and the chastising of the trespasours. [To this answered dame Prudence: Certes, quod she, I graunte you that of vengeaunce taking cometh muche evil and muche good; but vengeaunce taking apperteineth not to everich on, but only to juges, and to hem that han the jurisdiction over the trespasours;] and yet say I more, that right as a singuler persone sinneth in taking vengeaunce of another man, right so sinneth the juge, if he do no vengeaunce of hem that it han deserved. For Senek sayth thus: That maister (he sayth) is good, that preveth shrewes. And Cassiodore saith: A man dredeth to do outrages, whan he wot and knoweth, that it displeseth to the juges and soveraines. And another sayth: The juge that dredeth to do right, maketh men shrewes. And Seint Poule the Apostle sayth in his Epistle, whan he

writeth unto the Romaines, that the juges beren not the spere withouten cause, but they beren it to punishe the shrewes and misdoers, and for to defende the goode men. If ye wiln than take vengeaunce of youre enemies, ye shuln retourne or have your recours to the juge, that hath the jurisdiction upon hem, and he shal punishe hem, as the lawe axeth and requireth.

A, sayd Melibee, this vengeaunce liketh me nothing. I bethink me now, and take hede how that fortune hath norished me fro my childhode, and hath holpen me to passe many a stronge pas: now wol I assayen hire, trowing, with Goddes helpe, that she shal helpe me my shame for to venge.

Certes, quod Prudence, if ye wol werke by my conseil, ye shuln not assaye fortune by no way: ne ye ne shuln not lene or bowe unto hire, after the wordes of Senek; for thinges that ben folily don, and tho that ben don in hope of fortune, shuln never come to good ende. And as the same Senek sayth: The more clere and the more shining that fortune is, the more brotel and the soner broke she is. Trusteth not in hire, for she n'is not stedefast ne stable: for whan thou trowest to be most siker and seure of hire helpe, she wol faille and deceive thee. And wheras ye sayn, that fortune hath no-

rished you fro youre childhode, I say that in so muchel ye shuln the lesse truste in hire, and in hire wit. For Senek saith: What man that is norished by fortune, she maketh him a gret fool. Now than sin ye desire and axe vengeaunce, and the vengeaunce, that is don after the lawe and before the juge, ne liketh you not, and the vengeaunce, that is don in hope of fortune, is perilous and uncertain, than have ye non other remedie, but for to have your recours unto the soveraine juge, that vengeth alle vilanies, and wronges; and he shal venge you, after that himself witnesseth, wheras he saith; Leveth the vengeaunce to me, and I shal do it.

Melibeus answered: If I ne venge me of the vilanie that men han don to me, I sompne or warne hem, that han don to me vilanie, and alle other, to do me another vilanie. For it is written; If thou take no vengeaunce of an olde vilany, thou sompnest thin adversaries to do thee a newe vilanie: and also for my suffraunce, men wolden do me so muche vilanie, that I might neither bere it ne susteine; and so shulde I ben put and holden over lowe. For som men sain, In muchel suffring shul many thinges falle unto thee, which thou shalt not mowe suffre.

Certes, quod Prudence, I graunte you wel, that overmuchel suffraunce is not good, but yet ne

folweth it not therof, that every persone to whom men don vilanie, shuld take of it vengeaunce: for that apperteineth and longeth all only to the juges, for they shul venge the vilanies and injuries: and therfore tho two auctoritees, that ye han sayd above, ben only understonden in the juges: for whan they suffren overmuchel the wronges and vilanies to be don, withouten punishing, they sompne not a man all only for to do newe wronges, but they commaunden it: al so as a wise man sayth, that the juge that correcteth not the sinner, commaundeth and biddeth him do sinne. And the juges and soveraines mighten in hir lond so muche suffre of the shrewes and misdoers, that they shulden by swiche suffraunce, by proces of time, wexen of swiche power and might, that they shuld putte out the juges and the soveraines from hir places, and atte laste maken hem lese hir lordshippes.

But now let us putte, that ye have leve to venge you: I say ye be not of might and power, as now to venge you: for if ye wol maken comparison unto the might of youre adversaries, ye shuln finde in many thinges, that I have shewed you er this, that hir condition is better than youres, and therfore say I, that it is good as now, that ye suffre and be patient.

Forthermore ye knowen wel, that after the com-

mune saw, it is a woodnesse, a man to strive with a stronger, or a more mighty man than he is himself; and for to strive with a man of even strengthe, that is to say, with as strong a man as he is, it is peril; and for to strive with a weker man, it is folie; and therfore shulde a man flee striving, as muchel as he mighte. For Salomon sayth: It is a gret worship to a man to kepe him fro noise and strif. And if it so happe, that a man of greter mighte and strengthe than thou art, do thee grevaunce: studie and besie thee rather to stille the same grevaunce, than for to venge thee. For Senek sayth, that he putteth him in a grete peril, that striveth with a greter man than he is himself. And Caton sayth; If a man of higher estat or degree, or more mighty than thou, do thee anoye or grevance, suffre him; for he that ones hath greved thee, may another time releve thee and helpe thee. Yet sette I cas, ye have bothe might and licence for to venge you, I say that ther ben ful many thinges that shuln restreine you of vengeance taking, and make you for to encline to suffre, and for to han patience in the wronges that han ben don to you. First and forward, if ye wol considre the defautes that ben in youre owen persone, for which defautes God hath suffred you have this tribulation, as I have sayd

to you herebeforne. For the Poete sayth, that we oughten patiently taken the tribulations that comen to us, whan that we thinken and consideren, that we han deserved to have hem. And Seint Gregorie sayth, that whan a man considereth wel the nombre of his defautes and of his sinnes, the peines and the tribulations that he suffereth, semen the lesse unto him. And in as muche as him thinketh his sinnes more hevy and grevous, in so muche semeth his peine the lighter and the esier unto him. Also ye owen to encline and bowe youre herte, to take the patience of oure Lord Jesu Crist, as sayth Seint Peter in his Epistles. Jesu Crist (he saith) hath suffred for us, and yeven ensample to every man to folwe and sue him, for he dide never sinne, ne never came ther a vilains word out of his mouth. Whan men cursed him, he cursed hem nought; and whan men beten him, he manaced hem nought. Also the gret patience, which Seintes, that ben in Paradis han had in tribulations that they han suffred, withouten hir desert or gilt, oughte muchel stirre you to patience. Forthermore, ye shulde enforce you to have patience, considering that the tribulations of this world but litel while endure, and sone passed ben and gon, and the joye that a man seketh to han by patience in tribulations is

perdurable; after that the Apostle sayth in his Epistle; the joye of God, he sayth, is perdurable, that is to sayn, everlasting. Also troweth and beleveth stedfastly, that he n'is not wel ynorished ne wel ytaught, that cannot have patience, or wol not receive patience. For Salomon sayth, that the doctrine and wit of a man is knowen by patience. And in another place he sayeth, that he that is patient, governeth him by gret prudence. And the same Salomon saith: The angrie and wrathful man maketh noises, and the patient man attempreth and stilleth hem. He saith also, It is more worth to be patient than for to be right strong. And he that may have the lordshipe of his owen herte, is more to preise, than he that by his force or strengthe taketh gret citees. And therfore sayth Seint James in his Epistle, that patience is a gret vertue of perfection.

Certes, quod Melibee, I graunte you, Dame Prudence, that patience is a gret vertue of perfection, but every man may not have the perfection that ye seken, ne I am not of the nombre of the right parfit men: for min herte may never be in pees, unto the time it be venged. And al be it so, that it was gret peril to min enemies to do me a vilanie in taking vengeaunce upon me, yet token they non hede of the peril, but fulfilleden hir wicked will and hir

corage: and therfore me thinketh men oughten not repreve me, though I put me in a litel peril for to venge me, and though I do a gret excesse, that is to sayn, that I venge on outrage by another.

A, quod dame Prudence, ye sayn your will and as you liketh; but in no cas of the world a man shulde not don outrage ne excesse, for to vengen him. For Cassiodore sayth, that as evil doth he that vengeth him by outrage, as he that doth the outrage. And therfore ye shuln venge you after the ordre of right, that is to sayn, by the lawe, and not by excesse, ne by outrage. And also if ye wol venge you of the outrage of youre adversaries, in other manere than right commaundeth, ye sinnen. And therfore sayth Senek, that a man shal never venge shrewednesse by shrewednesse. And if ye say that right axeth a man to defende violence by violence, and fighting by fighting: certes ye say soth, whan the defence is don withouten intervalle, or withouten tarying or delay, for to defende him, and not for to venge. And it behoveth, that a man putte swiche attemperaunce in his defence, that men have no cause ne mater to repreve him, that defendeth him, of outrage and excesse, for elles were it againe reson. Parde ye knowen wel, that ye maken no defence as now, for to defende you,

but for to venge you: and so sheweth it, that ye han no will to do youre dede attemprely: and therfore me thinketh that patience is good. For Salomon sayth, that he that is not patient, shal have gret harme.

Certes, quod Melibee, I graunte you, that whan a man is impatient and wrothe of that that toucheth him not, and that apperteineth not unto him, though it harme him it is no wonder. For the lawe saith, that he is coupable that entremeteth or medleth with swiche thing, as apperteineth not unto him. And Salomon saith, that he that entremeteth of the noise or strif of another man, is like to him that taketh a straunge hound by the eres: for right as he that taketh a straunge hound by the eres is otherwhile bitten with the hound, right in the same wise, it is reson that he have harme, that by his impatience medleth him of the noise of another man, wheras it apperteineth not unto him. But ye knowe wel, that this dede, that is to sayn, my greef and my disese, toucheth me right nigh. And therfore though I be wroth and impatient, it is no mervaille: and (saving your grace) I cannot see that it might gretly harme me, though I took vengeaunce, for I am richer and more mighty than min enemies ben: and wel knowe ye, that by money and by having

grete possessions, ben alle thinges of this world governed. And Salomon sayth, that alle thinges obeye to money.

Whan Prudence had herd hire husbond avaunte him of his richesse and of his money, dispreising the power of his adversaries, she spake and sayd in this wise: Certes, dere Sire, I graunte you that ye ben riche and mighty, and that richesses ben good to hem that han wel ygeten hem, and that wel conne usen hem. For right as the body of a man may not liven withouten soul, no more may it liven withouten temporel goodes, and by richesses may a man gete him grete frendes. And therfore sayth Pamphilus: If a netherdes doughter (he sayth) be riche, she may chese of a thousand men, which she wol take to hire husbond: for of a thousand men on wol not forsaken hire ne refusen hire. And this Pamphilus saith also: If thou be right happy, that is to sayn, if thou be right riche, thou shalt finde a gret nombre of felawes and frendes; and if thy fortune chaunge, that thou wexe poure, farewel frendshipe and felawshipe, for thou shalt be al allone withouten any compaignie, but if it be the compaignie of poure folk. And yet sayth this Pamphilus moreover, that they that ben bond and thralle of linage, shuln be made worthy and noble by richesses. And

right so as by richesses ther comen many goodes, right so by poverte come ther many harmes and eviles: for gret poverte constreineth a man to do many eviles. And therfore clepeth Cassiodore poverte the moder of ruine, that is to sayn, the moder of overthrowing or falling doun. And therfore sayth Piers Alphonse: on of the gretest adversitees of this world, is whan a free man by kinde, or of birthe, is constreined by poverte to eten the almesse of his enemie. And the same sayth Innocent in on of his bookes: he sayth, that sorweful and mishappy is the condition of a poure begger, for if he axe not his mete, he dieth for hunger, and if he axe, he dieth for shame: and algates necessitee constreineth him to axe. And therfore sayth Salomon, that better it is to die, than for to have swiche poverte. And as the same Salomon sayth: Better it is to die of bitter deth, than for to liven in swiche wise. By thise resons that I have said unto you, and by many other resons that I coude saye, I graunte you that richesses ben good to hem that wel geten hem, and to hem that wel usen tho richesses: and therfore wol I shewe you how ye shuln behave you in gadering of youre richesses, and in what manere ye shuln usen hem.

First, ye shuln geten hem withouten gret desir,

by good leiser, sokingly, and not over hastifly, for a man that is to desiring to gete richesses, abandoneth him first to thefte and to alle other eviles. And therfore sayth Salomon: He that hasteth him to besily to wexe riche, he shal be non innocent. He sayth also, that the richesse that hastily cometh to a man, sone and lightly goeth and passeth from a man, but that richesse that cometh litel and litel, wexeth alway and multiplieth. And, Sire, ye shulen gete richesses by youre wit and by youre travaille, unto youre profite, and that withouten wrong or harme doing to any other persone. For the lawe sayth: Ther maketh no man himself riche, if he do harme to another wight; this is to say, that nature defendeth and forbedeth by right, that no man make himself riche, unto the harme of another persone. And Tullius sayth, that no sorwe, ne no drede of deth, ne nothing that may falle unto a man, is so muchel ageins nature, as a man to encrese his owen profite, to harme of another man. And though the grete men and the mighty men geten richesses more lightly than thou, yet shalt thou not ben idel ne slowe to do thy profite, for thou shalt in alle wise flee idelnesse. For Salomon sayth, that idelnesse techeth a man to do many eviles. And the same Salomon sayth, that he that

travailleth and besieth him to tillen his lond, shal ete bred: but he that is idel, and casteth him to no besinesse ne occupation, shal falle into poverte, and die for hunger. And he that is idel and slow, can never find covenable time for to do his profite. For ther is a versifiour sayth, that the idel man excuseth him in Winter, because of the grete cold, and in Summer by encheson of the hete. For thise causes, sayth Caton, waketh, and enclineth you not over muchel to slepe, for over muchel reste norisheth and causeth many vices. And therfore sayth Seint Jerome; Doeth som good dedes, that the devil which is oure enemie, ne finde you not unoccupied, for the devil ne taketh not lightly unto his werking swiche as he findeth occupied in goode werkes.

Than thus in geting richesses ye musten flee idelnesse. And afterward ye shuln usen the richesses, which ye han geten by youre wit and by youre travaille, in swiche manere, that men holde you not to scarce ne to sparing, ne fool-large, that is to say, over large a spender: for right as men blamen an avaricious man, because of his scarcitee and chincherie, in the same wise is he to blame, that spendeth over largely. And therfore saith Caton: Use (sayth he) the richesses that thou hast ygeten in swiche manere, that men have no matere ne cause

to calle thee nother wretche ne chinche: for it is a gret shame to a man to have a poure herte and a riche purse. He sayth also: the goodes that thou hast ygeten, use hem by mesure, that is to sayn, spende mesurably; for they that folily wasten and dispenden the goodes that they han, whan they han no more propre of hir owen, than they shapen hem to take the goodes of another man. I say than that ye shuln flee avarice, using youre richesses in swiche manere, that men sayn not that your richesses ben yberied, but that ye have hem in youre might, and in youre welding. For a wise man repreveth the avaricious man, and sayth thus in two vers. Wherto and why berieth a man his goodes by his gret avarice, and knoweth wel, that nedes must he die, for deth is the end of every man, as in this present lif? and for what cause or encheson joineth he him, or knitteth he him so fast unto his goodes, that alle his wittes mown not disseveren him, or departen him from his goodes, and knoweth wel, or oughte to knowe, that whan he is ded, he shal nothing bere with him out of this world? And therfore sayth Seint Augustine, that the avaricious man is likened unto helle, that the more it swalweth, the more desir it hath to swalwe and devoure. And as wel as ye wolde

eschue to be called an avaricious man or chinche, as wel shulde ye kepe you and governe you in swiche a wise, that men calle you not fool-large. Therfore saith Tullius: The goodes of thin hous ne shulde not ben hid ne kept so close, but that they might ben opened by pitee and debonairetee; that is to sayn, to yeve hem part that han gret nede; ne thy goodes shulden not ben so open, to be every mannes goodes. Afterward, in geting of youre richesses, and in using of hem, ye shuln alway have three thinges in youre herte, that is to say, oure Lord God, conscience, and good name. First, ye shuln have God in youre herte, and for no richesse ye shuln do no thing, which may in any manere displese God that is your creatour and maker. For after the word of Salomon, it is better to have a litel good with love of God, than to have muchel good, and lese the love of his Lord God. And the Prophete sayth, That better it is to ben a good man, and have litel good and tresor, than to be holden a shrewe, and have grete richesses. And yet I say forthermore, that ye shulden alway do youre besinesse to gete you richesses, so that ye gete hem with good conscience. And the Apostle sayth, that ther n'is thing in this world of which we shulden have so gret joye, as whan oure con-

science bereth us good witnesse. And the wise man sayth: The substaunce of a man is ful good, whan sinne is not in mannes conscience. Afterward, in geting of youre richesses, and in using of hem, ye must have gret besinesse and gret diligence, that youre good name be alway kept and conserved. For Salomon sayth, that beter it is, and more it availeth a man to have a good name, than for to have grete richesses: and therfore he sayth in another place: Do grete diligence (saith Salomon) in keping of thy frendes, and of thy good name, for it shal lenger abide with thee, than any tresor, be it never so precious. And certes, he shulde not be called a Gentilman, that after God and good conscience, alle thinges left, ne doth his diligence and besinesse, to kepen his good name. And Cassiodore sayth, that it is a signe of a gentil herte, whan a man loveth and desireth to have a good name. And therfore sayth Seint Augustine, that ther ben two thinges that arn right necessarie and nedeful; and that is good conscience, and good los; that is to sayn, good conscience to thin owen persone inward, and good los for thy neighebour outward. And he that trosteth him so muchel in his good conscience, that he despiseth and setteth at nought his good

name or los, and recketh not though he kepe not his good name, n'is but a cruel cherl.

Sire, now have I shewed you how ye shulden do in geting richesses, and how ye shuln usen hem: and I see wel that for the trust that ye han in youre richesses, ye wiln meve werre and bataille. I conseille you that ye beginne no bataille ne werre, in trust of youre richesses, for they ne sufficen not werres to mainteine. And therfore sayth a Philosophre: That man that desireth and wol algates han werre, shal never have suffisaunce: for the richer that he is, the greter dispences must he make, if he wol have worship and victorie. And Salomon saith, that the greter richesses that a man hath, the mo dispendours he hath. And, dere Sire, al be it so, that for your richesses ye moun have muchel folk, yet behoveth it not, ne it is not good to beginne werre, wheras ye moun in other manere have pees, unto youre worship and profite: for the victorie of batailles that ben in this world, lith not in gret nombre or multitude of peple, ne in the vertue of man, but it lith in the will and in the hond of oure Lord God almighty. And therfore Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knight, whan he shulde fighte again his adversarie, that hadde a

greter nombre and a greter multitude of folk, and strenger than was the peple of this Machabee, yet he recomforted his litel compaignie, and sayde right in this wise: Al so lightly (sayde he) may our Lord God almighty yeve victorie to a fewe folk, as to many folk; for the victorie of a bataille cometh not by the gret nombre of peple, but it cometh from oure Lord God of heven. And, dere Sire, for as muchel as ther is no man certaine, if it be worthy that God yeve him victorie or not, after that Salomon sayth, therfore every man shulde gretly drede werres to beginne: and because that in batailles fallen many perils, and it happeth other while, that as sone is the gret man slain, as the litel man; and, as it is ywritten in the second book of Kinges, the dedes of batailles ben aventurous, and nothing certain, for as lightly is on hurt with aspere as another; and for ther is gret peril in werre; therfore shulde a man flee and eschue werre in as muchel as a man may goodly. For Salomon sayth: He that loveth peril, shal falle in peril.

After that dame Prudence had spoken in this manere, Melibee answerd and saide: I see wel, dame Prudence, that by youre faire wordes and by

youre resons, that ye han shewed me, that the werre liketh you nothing: but I have not yet herd your conseil, how I shal do in this nede.

Certes, quod she, I conseille you that ye accorde with youre adversaries, and that ye have pees with hem. For Seint James sayth in his Epistle, that by concorde and pees, the smale richesses wexen grete, and by debat and discorde grete richesses fallen doun. And ye knowen wel, that on of the gretest and moste soveraine thing, that is in this world, is unitee and pees. And therfore sayde oure Lord Jesu Crist to his Apostles in this wise: Wel happy and blessed ben they that loven and purchasen pees, for they ben called the children of God. A, quod Melibee, now see I wel, that ye loven not min honour, ne my worshipe. Ye knowen wel that min adversaries han begonne this debat and brige by hir outrage, and ye see wel, that they ne requeren ne prayen me not of pees, ne they axen not to be reconciled; wol ye than that I go and meke me, and obeye me to hem, and crie hem mercie? Forsoth that were not my worshipe: for right as men sayn, that overgret homlinesse engendreth dispreising, so fareth it by to gret humilitee or mekenesse.

Than began dame Prudence to make semblaunt

of wrathe, and sayde: Certes, Sire, (sauf your grace) I love youre honour and youre profite, as I do min owen, and ever have don; ye, ne non other seyn never the contrary: and if I had sayde, that ye shulde han purchased the pees and the reconciliation, I ne hadde not muchel mistake me, ne sayde amis. For the Wise man sayth: The dissention beginneth by another man, and the reconciling beginneth by thyself. And the Prophete saith: Flee shrewednesse and do goodnesse; seke pees and folwe it, in as muchel as in thee is. Yet say I not, that ye shuln rather pursue to youre adversaries for pees, than they shuln to you: for I know wel that ye ben so hard-herted, that ye wol do nothing for me; and Salomon sayth: he that hath over hard an herte, atte laste he shal mishappe and mistide.

Whan Melibee had herd dame Prudence make semblaunt of wrath, he sayde in this wise. Dame, I pray you that ye be not displesed of thinges that I say, for I knowe wel that I am angry and wroth, and that is no wonder; and they that ben wroth, woten not wel what they don, ne what they sayn. Therfore the Prophete sayth, that troubled eyen han no clere sighte. But sayth and conseilleth me as you liketh, for I am redy to do right as ye wol

desire. And if ye repreve me of my folie, I am the more holden to love you and to preise you. For Salomon saith, that he that repreveth him that doth folie, he shal find greter grace, than he that deceiveth him by swete wordes.

Than sayde Dame Prudence; I make no semblaunt of wrath ne of anger, but for youre grete profite. For Salomon saith: he is more worth, that repreveth or chideth a fool for his folie, shewing him semblaunt of wrath, than he that supporteth him and preiseth him in his misdoing, and laugheth at his folie. And this same Salomon saith afterward, that by the sorweful visage of a man, that is to sayn, by the sory and hevy countenance of a man, the fool correcteth and amendeth himself.

Than said Melibee; I shal not conne answere unto so many faire resons as ye putten to me and shewen: sayth shortly youre will and youre conseil, and I am al redy to performe and fulfille it.

Than Dame Prudence discovered all hire will unto him and saide: I conseille you, quod she, above alle thinges that ye make pees betwene God and you, and be reconciled unto him and to his grace, for as I have sayde you herebeforen, God hath suffered you to have this tribulation and disese for youre sinnes: and if ye do as I say you, God

wol sende youre adversaries unto you, and make hem falle at youre feet, redy to do youre will and youre commaundements. For Salomon sayth; whan the condition of man is plesaunt and liking to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries, and constreineth hem to besechen him of pees and of grace. And I pray you let me speke with your adversaries in privee place, for they shuln not knowe that it be of youre will or youre assent; and than, whan I knowe hir will and hir entente, I may conseille you the more seurely.

Dame, quod Melibeus, doth youre will and youre liking, for I putte me holly in youre disposition and ordinaunce.

Than Dame Prudence, when she sey the good will of hire husbond, delibered unto hire, and toke avis in hire self, thinking how she might bring this nede unto goode ende. And whan she sey hire time, she sent for thise adversaries to come unto hire in to a privee place, and shewed wisely unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees, and the grete harmes and perils that ben in werre; and saide to hem, in a goodly manere, how that hem oughte have gret repentaunce of the injuries and wronges, that they hadden don to Melibeus hire lord, and unto hire and to hire doughter.

And whan they herden the goodly wordes of Dame Prudence, they weren so surprised and ravished, and hadden so gret joye of hire, that wonder was to telle. A, lady, quod they, ye have shewed unto us the blessing of swetenesse, after the saying of David the Prophete; for the reconciling, which we be not worthy to have in no manere, but we oughten requeren it with grete contrition and humilitee, ye of youre grete goodnesse have presented unto us. Now see we wel, that the science and conning of Salomon is ful trewe; for he saith, that swete wordes multiplien and encresen frendes, and maken shrewes to be debonaire and meke.

Certes, quod they, we putten oure dede, and all oure matere and cause, al holly in youre good will, and ben redy to obeye unto the speche and commaundement of my lord Melibeus. And therfore, dere and benigne lady, we praye you and beseche you as mekely as we conne and moun, that it like unto youre grete goodnesse to fulfille in dede youre goodly wordes. For we consideren and knowelechen, that we han offended and greved my lord Melibeus out of mesure, so fer forth, that we ben not of power to maken him amendes; and therfore we oblige and binde us and oure frendes, for to do all his will and his commaundements: but peraventure he hath

swiche hevinesse and swiche wrath to us ward, because of oure offence, that he wol enjoynen us swiche a peine, as we moun not bere ne susteine; and therfore, noble ladie, we beseche to youre womanly pittee to take swiche avisement in this nede, that we, ne oure frendes, ben not disherited and destroied, thurgh oure folie.

Certes, quod Prudence, it is an hard thing and right perilous, that a man putte him all outrely in the arbitration and jugement, and in the might and power of his enemie; for Salomon sayth: leveth me, and yeveth credence to that that I shall say: to thy sone, to thy wif, to thy frend, ne to thy brother, ne yeve thou never might ne maistrie over thy body, while thou livest. Now, sith he defendeth that a man shulde not yeve to his brother, ne to his frend, the might of his body, by a strenger reson he defendeth and forbedeth a man to yeve himself to his enemy. And natheles, I conseille you that ye mistruste not my lord: for I wot wel and know verily, that he is debonaire and meke, large, curteis, and nothing desirous ne coveitous of good ne richesse: for ther is nothing in this world that he desireth, save only worshipe and honour. Forthermore I know wel, and am right sure, that he shal nothing do in this nede withouten my conseil; and I shal so

werken in this cas, that by the grace of oure Lord God ye shuln be reconciled unto us.

Than saiden they with o vois; worshipful lady, we putten us and oure goodes al fully in youre will and disposition, and ben redy to come, what day that it like unto youre noblesse to limite us or assigné us, for to make oure obligation and bond, as strong as it liketh unto youre goodnesse, that we moun fulfille the will of you and of my lord Melibee.

Whan Dame Prudence had herd the answer of thise men, she bad hem go agein prively, and she retourned to hire lord Melibee, and told him how she fond his adversaries ful repentaunt, knowleching ful lowly hir sinnes and trespas, and how they weren redy to suffren all peine, requering and preying him of mercy and pitee.

Than saide Melibee; he is wel worthy to have pardon and foryevenesse of his sinne, that excuseth not his sinne, but knowlecheth, and repenteth him, axing indulgence. For Senek saith; ther is the remission and foryevenesse, wher as the confession is; for confession is neighebour to innocence. And therefore I assente and conferme me to have pees, but it is good that we do nought withouten the assent and will of oure frendes.

Than was Prudence right glad and joyeful, and

saide; certes, sire, ye han wel and goodly answered: for right as by the conseil, assent, and helpe of your frendes, ye han be stired to venge you and make werre, right so withouten hir conseil shul ye not accord you, ne have pees with youre adversaries. For the lawe saith: ther is nothing so good by way of kinde, as a thing to be unbounde by him that it was ybounde.

And than Dame Prudence, withouten delay or tarying, sent anon hir messageres for hir kin and for hir olde frendes, which that were trewe and wise: and told hem by ordre, in the presence of Melibee, all the matere, as it is above expressed and declared; and preied hem that they wold yeve hir avis and conseil, what were best to do in this nede. And whan Melibeus frendes hadden taken hire avis and deliberation of the foresaid matere, and hadden examined it by gret besinesse and gret diligence, they yaven ful conseil for to have pees and reste, and that Melibee shulde receive with good herte his adversaries to foryevenesse and mercy.

And whan dame Prudence had herd the assent of hire lord Melibee, and the conseil of his frendes, accord with hire will and hire entention, she was wonder glad in hire herte, and sayde: ther is an olde Proverbe, quod she, sayth, that the goodnesse

that thou maist do this day, do it, and abide not, ne delay it not til to morwe: and therfore I conseille, that ye sende youre messageres, swiche as ben discrete and wise, unto youre adversaries, telling hem on youre behalf, that if they wol trete of pees and of accord, that they shape hem, withouten delay or tarying, to come unto us. Which thing parfourmed was indede. And whan thise trespasours and repenting folk of hir folies, that is to sayn, the adversaries of Melibee, hadden herd what thise messageres sayden unto hem, they weren right glade and joyeful, and answerden ful mekely and benignely, yelding graces and thankinges to hir lord Melibee, and to all his compagnie: and shopen hem withouten delay to go with the messageres, and obeye to the commaundement of hir lord Melibee.

And right anon they token hir way to the court of Melibee, and token with hem som of hir trewe frendes, to make feith for hem, and for to ben hir borwes. And whan they were comen to the presence of Melibee, he saide hem thise wordes: it stant thus, quod Melibee, and soth it is, that ye causeles, and withouten skill and reson, han don grete injuries and wronges to me, and to my wif Prudence, and to my doughter also, for ye han entred into myn hous by violence, and have don

swiche outrage, that alle men knowen wel that ye han deserved the deth: and therfore wol I know and wete of you, whether ye wol putte the punishing and chastising, and the vengeaunce of this outrage, in the will of me and of my wif, or ye wol not.

Than the wisest of hem three answered for hem alle, and saide. Sire, quod he, we knowen wel, that we ben unworthy to come to the court of so gret a lord and so worthy as ye ben, for we han so gretly mistaken us, and han offended and agilte in swiche wise agein youre high lordshipe, that trewely we han deserved the deth; but yet for the grete goodnesse and debonairetee, that all the world witnesseth of youre persone, we submitten us to the excellence and benignitee of youre gracious lordshipe, and ben redy to obeye to alle youre comandements, beseching you, that of youre merciable pitee ye wol considere oure grete repentance and lowe submission, and graunte us foryevenesse of oure outragious trespas and offence: for wel we knowen, that youre liberal grace and mercie stretchen hem forther into goodnesse, than don oure outragious giltes and trespas into wickednesse; al be it that cursedly and dampnably we han agilte again youre highe lordshipe.

Than Melibee toke hem up fro the ground ful

benignely, and received hir obligations, and hir bondes, by hir othes upon hir plegges and borwes, and assigned hem a certain day to retourne unto his court for to receive and accept sentence and jugement, that Melibee wolde commande to be don on hem, by the causes aforesaid; which thinges ordeined, every man retourned to his hous.

And whan that Dame Prudence saw hire time, she freined and axed hire lord Melibee, what vengeance he thoughte to taken of his adversaries.

To which Melibee answerd, and saide: certes, quod he, I thinke and purpose me fully to disherite hem of all that ever they han, and for to putte hem in exile for ever.

Certes, quod Dame Prudence, this were a cruel sentence, and muchel agein reson. For ye ben riche ynough, and han no nede of other mennes good; and ye might lightly in this wise gete you a coveitous name, which is a vicious thing, and oughte to ben eschewed of every good man: for after the sawe of the Apostle, coveitise is rote of alle harmes. And therfore it were better for you to lese muchel good of your owen, than for to take of hir good in this manere. For better it is to lese good with worship, than to winne good with vilanie and shame. And every man oughte to do his diligence and his

besinesse, to gete him a good name. And yet shal he not only besie him in keping his good name, but he shal also enforcen him alway to do som thing, by which he may renovelle his good name: for it is written, that the olde good los, or good name, of a man is sone gon and passed, whan it is not newed. And as touching that ye sayn, that ye wol exile your adversaries, that thinketh me muchel agein reson, and out of mesure, considered the power that they han yeven you upon hemself. And it is written, that he is worthy to lese his privilege, that misuseth the might and the power that is yeven him. And I sette cas, ye might enjoine hem that peine by right and by lawe, (which I trowe ye mowe not do) I say, ye might not putte it to execution peraventure, and than it were like to retourne to the werre, as it was beforn. And therfore if ye wol that men do you obeisaunce, ye must deme more curteisly, that is to sayn, ye must yeve more esie sentences and jugements. For it is written: he that most curteisly commandeth, to him men most obeyen. And therfore I pray you, that in this necessitee and in this nede ye caste you to overcome youre herte. For Senek sayth, that he that overcometh his herte, overcometh twies. And Tullius saith: ther is nothing

so commendable in a gret lord, as whan he is debonaire and meke, and appeseth him lightly. And I pray you, that ye wol now forbere to do vengeaunce, in swiche a manere, that your good name may be kept and conserved, and that men mown have cause and matere to preise you of pitee and of mercy; and that ye have no cause to repente you of thing that ye don. For Seneke saieth: he overcometh in an evil manere, that repenteth him of his victorie. Wherfore I pray you let mercy be in youre herte, to the effect and entente, that God almighty have mercy upon you in his last jugement: for seint James saith in his Epistle: jugement withoute mercy shal he do to him, that hath no mercy of another wight.

Whan Melibee had herd the grete skilles and resons of dame Prudence, and hire wise informations and techinges, his herte gan encline to the will of his wif, considering hire trewe entente, enforced him anon and assented fully to werken after hire conseil, and thanked God, of whom procedeth all goodnesse and all vertue, that him sent a wif of so gret discretion. And whan the day came that his adversaries shulde appere in his presence, he spake to hem ful goodly, and saide in this wise. Al be it so, that of youre pride and high presump-

tion and folie, and of youre negligence and unconning, ye have misborne you, and trespased unto me, yet for as muchel as I see and behold youre grete humilitee, and that ye ben sory and repentant of youre giltes, it constreineth me to do you grace and mercy: wherfore I receive you into my grace, and foryeve you outrely alle the offences, injuries, and wronges, that ye have don agein me and mine, to this effect and to this ende, that God of his endeles mercie wol at the time of oure dying foryeve us oure giltes, that we han trespased to him in this wretched world: for douteles, if we be sory and repentant of the sinnes and giltes, which we han trespased in the sight of oure Lord God, he is so free and so merciable, that he wol foryeven us oure giltes, and bringen us to the blisse that never hath ende. *Amen.*

THE MONKES PROLOGUE.

WHAN ended was my tale of Melibee, 13895
And of Prudence and hire benignitee,
Our hoste saide; as I am faithful man,
And by the precious *corpus Madrian*,
I hadde lever than a barell of ale,
That goode lefe my wif had herde this tale: 13900

For she n'is no thing of swiche patience,
As was this Melibeus wif Prudence.
By Goddes bones, whan I bete my knaves,
She bringeth me the grete clobbed staves,
And cryeth; slee the dogges everich on,
And breke hem bothe bak and every bon.
And if that any neighebour of mine
Wol not in chirche to my wif encline,
Or be so hardy to hire to trespace,
Whan she cometh home she rampeth in my face,
And cryeth; false coward, wreke thy wif:
By *corpus Domini*, I wol have thy knif,
And thou shalt have my distaf, and go spinne.
Fro day til night right thus she wol beginne.
Alas, she saith, that ever I was yshape
To wed a milksop, or a coward ape,
That wol ben overladde with every wight!
Thou darst not stonden by thy wives right.
This is my lif, but if that I wol fight,
And out at dore anon I mote me dight,
Or elles I am lost, but if that I
Be like a wilde leon, fool-hardy.
I wote wel she wol do me slee som day
Som neighebour, and thanne go my way,
For I am perilous with knif in honde,
Al be it that I dare not hire withstonde:

For she is bigge in armes by my faith,
That shal he finde, that hire misdoth or saith.
But let us passe away fro this matere.
My lord the Monk, quod he, be mery of chere,
For ye shul telle a tale trewely.
Lo, Rouchester stondeth here faste by.
Ride forth, min owen lord, breke not our game.
But by my trouthe I can not telle youre name;
Whether shal I call you my lord Dan John,
Or Dan Thomas, or elles Dan Albon?
Of what hous be ye, by your fader kin?
I vow to God, thou hast a ful faire skin;
It is a gentil pasture ther thou gost;
Thou art not like a penaunt or a gost.
Upon my faith thou art som officer,
Som worthy sextein, or som celerer.
For by my fadres soule, as to my dome,
Thou art a maister, whan thou art at home;
No poure cloisterer, ne non novice,
But a governour bothe ware and wise,
And therwithal of braunes and of bones
A right wel faring persone for the nones.
I pray to God yeve him confusion,
That first thee brought into religion.
Thou woldest han ben a trede-foul a right,
Haddest thou as grete leve, as thou hast might,

To parfourme all thy lust in engendrure,
Thou haddest begeten many a creature.
Alas! why werest thou so wide a cope?
God yeve me sorwe, but, and I were pope,
Not only thou but every mighty man,
Though he were shore ful high upon his pan,
Shuld have a wif, for al this world is lorn;
Religion hath take up all the corn
Of treding, and we borel men ben shrimpes:
Of feble trees ther comen wretched impes.
This maketh that our heires ben so sclendre
And feble, that they moun not wel engendre.
This maketh that our wives wol assaye
Religious folk, for they moun better paye
Of Venus payementes than mowen we:
God wote, no lussheburghes payen ye.
But be not wroth, my lord, though that I play;
Ful oft in game a sothe have I herd say.

This worthy Monke toke all in patience,
And saide; I wol don all my diligence,
As fer as souneth into honestee,
To tellen you a tale, or two or three.
And if you list to herken hiderward,
I wol you sayn the lif of Seint Edward;
Or elles tragedies first I wol telle,
Of which I have an hundred in my celle.

Tragedie is to sayn a certain storie,
As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of him that stood in gret prosperitee,
And is yfallen out of high degree
In to miserie, and endeth wretchedly.
And they ben versified communly
Of six feet, which men clepen exametron:
In prose eke ben endited many on,
And eke in metre, in many a sondry wise.
Lo, this declaring ought ynough suffice.
Now herkeneth, if you liketh for to here.
But first I you beseche in this matere,
Though I by ordre telle not thise thinges,
Be it of popes, emperoures, or kinges,
After hir ages, as men written finde,
But telle hem som before and som behinde,
As it now cometh to my remembrance,
Have me excused of min ignorance.

THE MONKES TALE.

I WOL bewaile in manere of tragedie
The harm of hem, that stode in high degree,
And fellen so, that ther n'as no remedie
To bring hem out of hir adversitee.
For certain whan that fortune list to flee,

Ther may no man of hire the cours withholde:
Let no man trust on blinde prosperitee;
Beth ware by thise ensamples trewe and olde.

Lucifer.

At Lucifer, though he an angel were
And not a man, at him I wol beginne.
For though fortune may non angel dere,
From high degree yet fell he for his sinne
Doun into helle, wheras he yet is inne.
O Lucifer, brightest of angels alle,
Now art thou Sathanas, that maist not twinne
Out of miserie, in which that thou art falle.

Adam.

Lo Adam, in the feld of Damascene
With Goddes owen finger wrought was he,
And not begeten of mannes sperme unclene,
And welte all Paradis saving o tree:
Had never worldly man so high degree
As Adam, til he for misgovernance
Was driven out of his prosperitee
To labour, and to helle, and to meschance.

Sampson.

Lo Sampson, which that was annunciat

By the angel, long or his nativitee: 14022
And was to God Almighty consecrat,
And stode in noblesse while he mighte see:
Was never swiche another as was he,
To speke of strength, and therto hardinesse:
But to his wives tolde he his secree,
Thurgh which he slow himself for wretchednesse.

Sampson, this noble and mighty champion, 14029
Withouten wepen, save his handes twey,
He slow and all to-rente the leon,
Toward his wedding walking by the wey:
His false wif coude him so plese, and pray,
Til she his conseil knewe; and she untrewe
Unto his foos his conseil gan bewray,
And him forsoke, and toke another newe.

Three hundred foxes toke Sampson for ire, 14037
And all hir tayles he togeder bond:
And set the foxes tayles all on fire,
For he in every tayl had knit a brond.
And they brent all the cornes in that lond,
And all hir oliveres, and vines eke.
A thousand men he slow eke with his hond,
And had no wepen, but an asses cheke.

Whan they were slain, so thursted him, that he 14045

Was wel nie lorne, for which he gan to preye, 14046
That God wold on his peine han som pitee,
And send him drinke, or elles moste he deye:
And of this asses cheke, that was so dreye,
Out of a wang toth sprang anon a welle,
Of which he dranke ynough, shortly to seye.
Thus halp him God, as *Judicum* can telle.

By veray force at Gasa on a night, 14053
Maugre the Philistins of that citee,
The gates of the toun he hath up plight,
And on his bak ycaried hem hath he
High on an hill, wher as men might hem se.
O noble mighty Sampsou, lefe and dere,
Haddest thou not told to women thy secree,
In all this world ne had ther ben thy pere.

This Sampson never sider drank ne wine, 14061
Ne on his hed came rasour non ne shere,
By precept of the messager divine,
For all his strengthes in his heres were:
And fully twenty winter yere by yere
He hadde of Israel the governance:
But sone shal he wepen many a tere,
For women shuln him bringen to meschance.

Unto his lemman Dalida he told, 14069

That in his heres all his strengthe lay,
And falsely to his fomen she him sold;
And sleping in hire barme upon a day
She made to clip or shere his here away,
And made his fomen all his craft espien;
And whan that they him fond in this array,
They bond him fast, and putten out his eyen.

But or his here was clipped or yshave,
Ther was no bond, with which men might him bind,
But now is he in prison in a cave,
Wheras they made him at the querne grinde.
O noble Sampson, strongest of mankind,
O whilom juge in glory and richesse,
Now mayest thou wepen with thin eyen blind,
Sith thou fro wele art falle in wretchednesse.

The ende of this caitif was, as I shal seye:
His fomen made a feste upon a day,
And made him as hir fool before hem pleye:
And this was in a temple of gret array.
But at the last he made a foule affray,
For he two pillers shoke, and made hem falle,
And doun fell temple and all, and ther it lay,
And slow himself, and eke his fomen alle.

This is to sayn, the princes everich on,

And eke three thousand bodies were ther slain
With falling of the gret temple of ston.
Of Sampson now wol I no more sain:
Beth ware by this ensample old and plain,
That no men tell hir conseil to hir wives
Of swiche thing, as they wold han secree fain,
If that it touch hir limmes or hir lives.

Hercules.

Of Hercules the soveraine conquerour
Singen his werkes laude, and high renoun;
For in his time of strength he was the flour.
He slow and raft the skinne of the leon;
He of Centaures laid the bost adoun;
He Harpies slow, the cruel briddes felle;
He golden apples raft fro the dragon;
He drow out Cerberus the hound of helle.

He slow the cruel tirant Busirus,
And made his hors to fret him flesh and bon;
He slow the firy serpent venemous;
Of Achelous two hornes brake he on.
And he slow Cacus in a cave of ston;
He slow the geaunt Anteus the strong;
He slow the grisely bore, and that anon;
And bare the hevene on his nekke long.

Was never wight sith that the world began,
That slow so many monstres, as did he;
Thurghout the wide world his name ran,
What for his strength, and for his high bountee;
And every reaume went he for to see,
He was so strong that no man might him let;
At bothe the worldes endes, saith Trophee,
In stede of boundes he a piller set.

A lemman had this noble champion,
That highte Deianire, as fresh as May;
And as thise clerkes maken mention,
She hath him sent a sherte fresh and gay:
Alas! this sherte, alas and wala wa!
Evenimed was sotilly withalle,
That or that he had wered it half a day,
It made his flesh all from his bones falle.

But natheles som clerkes hire excusen
By on, that highte Nessus, that it maked;
Be as may be, I wol hire not accusen;
But on his bak this sherte he wered al naked,
Til that his flesh was for the venim blaked:
And whan he saw non other remedie;
In hote coles he hath himselven raked,
For with no venime deigned him to die.

Thus starf this worthy mighty Hercules.
Lo, who may trust on fortune any throw?
For him that folweth all this world of pres,
Or he be ware, is oft ylaid ful lowe:
Ful wise is he, that can himselven knowe.
Beth ware, for whan that fortune list to glose,
Than waiteth she hire man to overthrowe
By swiche a way, as he wold lest suppose.

Nabuchodonosor.

The mighty trone, the precious tresor,
The glorious sceptre, and real majestee,
That hadde the king Nabuchodonosor,
With tonge unnethes may descrived be.
He twies wan Jerusalem the citee,
The vessell of the temple he with him ladde;
At Babiloine was his soveraine see,
In which his glorie and his delit he hadde.

The fayrest children of the blood real
Of Israel he did do gelde anon,
And maked eche of hem to ben his thral.
Amonges other Daniel was on,
That was the wisest child of everich on;
For he the dremes of the king expouned,
Wher as in Caldee clerk ne was ther non,
That wiste to what fin his dremes souned.

This proude king let make a statue of gold
Sixty cubites long, and seven in brede,
To which image bothe yonge and old
Commanded he to loute, and have in drede,
Or in a fourneis, ful of flames rede,
He shuld be brent, that wolde not obeye:
But never wold assenten to that dede
Daniel, ne his yonge felawes tweye.

This king of kinges proud was and elat;
He wend that God, that sit in majestee,
Ne might him nat bereve of his estat:
But sodenly he lost his dignitee,
And like a best him semed for to be,
And ete hey as an oxe, and lay therout:
In rain with wilde bestes walked he,
Til certain time was ycome about.

And like an egles fethers wex his heres,
His neyles like a briddes clawes were,
Til God relesed him at certain yeres.
And yaf him wit, and than with many a tere
He thanked God, and ever his lif in fere
Was he to don amis, or more trespace:
And til that time he laid was on his bere,
He knew that God was ful of might and grace.

Balthasar.

His sone, which that highte Balthasar,
That held the regne after his fadres day,
He by his fader coude not beware,
For proude he was of herte, and of array:
And eke an ydolaster was he ay.
His high estat assured him in pride;
But fortune cast him doun (and ther he lay)
And sodenly his regne gan devide.

A feste he made unto his lordes alle
Upon a time, and made hem blithe be,
And than his officeres gan he calle;
Goth, bringeth forthe the vessels, quod he,
Which that my fader in his prosperitee
Out of the temple of Jerusalem beraft,
And to our highe goddes thanke we
Of honour, that our eldres with us laft.

His wif, his lordes, and his concubines
Ay dronken, while hir appetites last,
Out of thise noble vessels sondry wines.
And on a wall this king his eyen cast,
And saw an hand armles, that wrote ful fast,
For fere of whiche he quoke, and siked sore.
This hand, that Balthasar so sore agast,
Wrote *Mane techel phares*, and no more.

In al that lond Magicien was non,
That coud expounen what this lettre ment,
But Daniel expouned it anon,
And said; O king, God to thy fader lent
Glorie and honour, regne, tresour, and rent;
And he was proud, and nothing God ne dradde;
And therfore God gret wreche upon him sent,
And him beraft the regne that he hadde.

He was out cast of mannes compagnie,
With asses was his habitation;
And ete hey, as a best, in wete and drie,
Til that he knew by grace and by reson,
That God of heven hath domination
Over every regne, and every creature:
And than had God of him compassion,
And him restored his regne and his figure.

Eke thou, that art his sone, art proud also,
And knowest all thise thinges verailly;
And art rebel to God, and art his fo.
Thou dranke eke of his vessels boldely,
Thy wif eke, and thy wenches sinfully
Dranke of the same vessels sondry wines,
And heried false goddes cursedly,
Therfore to thee yshapen ful gret pine is.

This hand was sent fro God, that on the wall
Wrote *Mane techel phares*, trusteth me;
Thy regne is don, thou weyest nought at all;
Divided is thy regne, and it shal be
To Medes and to Perses yeven, quod he.
And thilke same night this king was slawe;
And Darius occupied his degree,
Though he therto had neither right ne lawe.

Lordinges, ensample hereby moun ye take,
How that in lordship is no sikernesse:
For whan that fortune wol a man forsake,
She bereth away his regne and his richesse,
And eke his frendes, bothe more and lesse.
For what man that hath frendes thurgh fortune,
Mishap wol make hem enemies, I gesse.
This proverbe is ful soth, and ful commune.

Zenobia.

Zenobia, of Palmerie the quene,
(As writen Persiens of hire noblesse)
So worthy was in armes, and so kene,
That no wight passed hire in hardinesse,
Ne in linage, ne in other gentillesse.
Of kinges blood of Perse is she descended;
I say not that she hadde most fairenesse,
But of hire shape she might not ben amended.

From hire childhode I finde that she fledde
Office of woman, and to wode she went;
And many a wilde hartes blood she shedde
With arwes brode that she to hem sent;
She was so swift, that she anon hem hent.
And whan that she was elder, she wold kille
Leons, lepards, and beres al to-rent,
And in hire armes weld hem at hire wille.

She dorst the wilde bestes dennes seke,
And rennen in the mountaignes all the night,
And slepe under the bush; and she coud eke
Wrastlen by veray force and veray might
With any yong man, were he never so wight;
Ther mighte nothing in hire armes stonde;
She kept hire maidenhode from every wight,
To no man deigned hire for to be bonde.

But at the last hire frendes han hire maried
To Odenate, a prince of that contree;
Al were it so, that she hem longe taried.
And ye shul understonden, how that he
Hadde swiche fantasies as hadde she;
But natheles, whan they were knit in fere,
They lived in joye, and in felicitee,
For eche of hem had other lefe and dere.

Save o thing, that she n'olde never assente,
By no way, that he shulde by hire lie
But ones, for it was hire plaine entente
To have a childe, the world to multiplie:
And al so sone as that she might espie,
That she was not with childe with that dede,
Than would she suffer him don his fantasie
Eftsone, and not but ones out of drede.

And if she were with child at thilke cast,
No more shuld he playen thilke game
Till fully fourty dayes weren past:
Than wold she ones suffre him do the same.
Al were this Odenate wild or tame,
He gate no more of hire, for thus she sayde,
It was to wives lecherie and shame,
In other cas if that men with hem playde.

Two sones by this Odenate had she,
The which she kept in vertue and lettrure.
But now unto our tale turne we:
I say, so worshipful a creature,
And wise therwith, and large with mesure,
So penible in the werre, and curteis eke,
Ne more labour might in werre endure,
Was non, though al this world men shulden seke.

Hire riche array ne mighte not be told,
As wel in vessell as in hire clothing:
She was al clad in pierrie and in gold,
And eke she lefte not for non hunting
To have of sondry tonges ful knowing,
Whan that she leiser had, and for to entend
To lernen bookes was all hire liking,
How she in vertue might hire lif dispend.

And shortly of this storie for to trete,
So doughty was hire husbond and eke she,
That they conquered many regnes grete
In the Orient, with many a faire citee,
Appertenaunt unto the majestee
Of Rome, and with strong hand held hem ful fast,
Ne never might hir fomen don hem flee,
Ay while that Odenates dayes last.

Hire batailles, who so list hem for to rede,
Againe Sapor the king, and other mo,
And how that all this processe fell in dede,
Why she conquered, and what title therto,
And after of hire mischefe and hire wo,
How that she was beseged, and ytake,
Let him unto my maister Petrark go,
That writeth ynough of this, I undertake.

Whan Odenate was ded, she mightily
The regnes held, and with hire propre hond
Agains hire fos she fought so cruelly,
That ther n'as king ne prince in all that lond,
That he n'as glad, if he that grace fond
That she ne wolde upon his lond werreye:
With hire they maden alliaunce by bond
To ben in pees, and let hire ride and pleye.

The emperour of Rome Claudius,
Ne, him beforn, the Romain Galien
Ne dorste never be so corageous,
Ne non Ermin, ne non Egiptien,
Ne Surrien, ne non Arabien
Within the feld ne dorste with hire fight,
Lest that she wold hem with hire hondes slen,
Or with hire meinie putten hem to flight.

In kinges habite wente hire sones two,
As heires of hir fadres regnes alle,
And Heremanno and Timolao
Hir names were, as Persiens hem calle.
But ay fortune hath in hire hony galle:
This mighty quene may no while endure,
Fortune out of hire regne made hire falle
To wretchednesse, and to misaventure.

Aurelian, whan that the governance
Of Rome came into his hondes twey,
He shope upon this quene to do vengeance,
And with his legions he toke his way
Toward Zenobie, and shortly for to say,
He made hire flee, and atte last hire hent,
And fettred hire, and eke hire children tway,
And wan the lond, and home to Rome he went.

Amonges other thinges that he wan,
Hire char, that was with gold wrought and pierrie,
This grete Romain, this Aurelian
Hath with him lad, for that men shuld it see.
Beforen his triumphe walketh she
With gilte chaines on hire necke honging,
Crouned she was, as after hire degree,
And ful of pierrie charged hire clothing.

Alas fortune! she that whilom was
Dredeful to kinges and to emperoures,
Now gaureth all the peple on hire, alas!
And she that helmed was in starke stoures,
And wan by force tounes stronge and toures,
Shal on hire hed now were a vitremite:
And she that bare the sceptre ful of floures,
Shal bere a distaf hire cost for to quite.

Nero.

Although that Nero were as vicious,
As any fend, that lith ful low adoun,
Yet he, as telleth us Suetonius,
This wide world had in subjectioun.
Both Est and West, South and Septentrioun.
Of rubies, saphires, and of perles white
Were all his clothes brouded up and doun,
For he in gemmes gretly gan delite.

More delicat, more pompous of array,
More proude, was never emperour than he;
That ilke cloth that he had wered o day,
After that time he n'olde it never see;
Nettes of gold threde had he gret plentee,
To fish in Tiber, whan him list to play;
His lustes were as law, in his degree,
For fortune as his frend wold him obay.

He Rome brente for his delicacie;
The senatours he slow upon a day,
To heren how that men wold wepe and crie;
And slow his brother, and by his suster lay.
His moder made he in pitous array,
For he hire wombe let slitten, to behold
Wher he conceived was, so wala wa!
That he so litel of his moder told.

No tere out of his eyen for that sight
Ne came, but sayd, a faire woman was she.
Gret wonder is, how that he coud or might
Be domesman of hire dede beautee:
The wine to bringen him commanded he,
And dranke anon, non other wo he made.
Whan might is joined unto crueltee,
Alas! to depe wol the venime wade.

In youthe a maister had this emperour
To techen him lettrure and curtesie,
For of moralitee he was the flour,
As in his time, but if bookes lie.
And while this maister had of him maistrie,
He maked him so conning and so souple,
That longe time it was, or tyrannie,
Or any vice dorst in him uncouple.

This Seneka, of which that I devise,
Because Nero had of him swiche drede,
For he fro vices wold him ay chastise
Discretly, as by word, and not by dede,
Sire, he wold say, an emperour mote nede
Be vertuous, and haten tyrannie.
For which he made him in a bathe to blede
On bothe his armes, till he muste die.

This Nero had eke of a custumaunce
In youth ageins his maister for to rise;
Which afterward him thought a gret grevaunce,
Therfore he made him dien in this wise.
But natheles this Seneka the wise
Chees in a bathe to die in this manere,
Rather than han another turmentise:
And thus hath Nero slain his maister dere.

Now fell it so, that fortune list no lenger
The highe pride of Nero to cherice:
For though that he were strong, yet was she strenger.
She thoughte thus; by God I am to nice
To set a man, that is fulfilled of vice,
In high degree, and emperour him calle:
By God out of his sete I wol him trice,
Whan he lest weneth, sonest shal he falle.

The peple rose upon him on a night
For his defaute, and whan he it espied,
Out of his dores anon he hath him dight
Alone, and ther he wend han ben allied,
He knocked fast, and ay the more he cried,
The faster shetten they hir dores alle:
Tho wist he wel he had himself misgied,
And went his way, no lenger dorst he calle.

The peple cried and rombled up and doun,
That with his eres herd he how they sayde,
Wher is this false tyrant, this Neroun?
For fere almost out of his wit he brayde,
And to his goddes pitously he preide
For socour, but it mighte not betide:
For drede of this him thoughte that he deide,
And ran into a gardin him to hide.

And in this gardin fond he cherles tweye
That saten by a fire gret and red,
And to thise cherles two he gan to preye
To slen him, and to girden of his hed,
That to his body, whan that he were ded,
Were no despit ydon for his defame.
Himself he slow, he coud no better rede,
Of which fortune lough and hadde a game.

Holofernes.

Was never capitaine under a king,
That regnes mo put in subjectioun,
Ne strenger was in feld of alle thing
As in his time, ne greter of renoun,
Ne more pompous in high presumptioun,
Than Holoferne, which that fortune ay kist
So likerously, and lad him up and doun,
Til that his hed was of, or that he wist.

Not only that this world had him in awe
For lesing of richesse and libertee;
But he made every man reneie his lawe.
Nabuchodonosor was God, sayd he;
Non other God ne shulde honoured be.
Ageins his heste ther dare no wight trespace,
Save in Bethulia, a strong citee,
Wher Eliachim a preest was of that place.

But take kepe of the deth of Holoferne:
Amid his host he dronken lay a night
Within his tente, large as is a berne;
And yet for all his pompe and all his might,
Judith, a woman, as he lay upright
Sleping, his hed of smote, and fro his tente
Ful prively she stale from every wight,
And with his hed unto hire toun she wente.

Antiochus.

What nedeth it of king Antiochus
To tell his high and real majestee,
His gret pride, and his werkes venimous?
For swiche another was ther non as he;
Redeth what that he was in Machabe.
And redeth the proud wordes that he seid,

And why he fell from his prosperitee,
And in an hill how wretchedly he deid.

Fortune him had enhaunsed so in pride,
That verily he wend he might attaine
Unto the sterres upon every side,
And in a balaunce weyen eche mountaine,
And all the floodes of the see restreine:
And Goddes peple had he most in hate,
Hem wold he sieen in turment and in peine,
Wening that God ne might his pride abate.

And for that Nichanor and Timothee
With Jewes were venquished mightily,
Unto the Jewes swiche an hate had he,
That he bad greithe his char ful hastily,
And swore and sayde ful despitously,
Unto Jerusalem he wold eftsone
To wreke his ire on it ful cruelly,
But of his purpos was he let ful sone.

God for his manace him so sore smote,
With invisible wound, ay incurable,
That in his guttes carfe it so and bote,
Til thatte his peines weren importable;

And certainly the wreche was resonable,
For many a mannes guttes did he peine;
But from his purpos, cursed and damnable,
For all his smerte, he n'olde him not restreine:

But bade anon apparailen his host.
And sodenly, or he was of it ware,
God daunted all his pride, and all his bost;
For he so sore fell out of his chare,
That it his limmes and his skinne to-tare,
So that he neither mighte go ne ride;
But in a chaiere men about him bare,
Alle forbrused bothe bak and side.

The wreche of God him smote so cruelly,
That thurgh his body wicked wormes crept,
And therwithal he stanke so horribly,
That non of all his meinie that him kept,
Whether so that he woke or elles slept,
Ne mighte not of him the stinke endure.
In this mischiefe he wailed and eke wept,
And knew God, Lord of every creature.

To all his host, and to himself also
Ful wlatsom was the stinke of his careine;
No man ne mighte him beren to ne fro.

And in this stinke, and this horrible peine,
He starf ful wretchedly in a mountaine.
Thus hath this robbour, and this homicide,
That many a man made to wepe and pleine,
Swiche guerdon, as belongeth unto pride.

Alexander.

The storie of Alexandre is so commune,
That every wight, that hath discretioun,
Hath herd somwhat or all of his fortune.
This wide world, as in conclusioun,
He wan by strength, or for his high renoun
They weren glad for pees unto him sende.
The pride of man and bost he layd adoun,
Wher so he came, unto the worldes ende.

Comparison might never yet be maked
Betwix him and another conquerour,
For al this world for drede of him hath quaked;
He was of knighthode and of fredome flour;
Fortune him maked the heir of hire honour.
Save wine and women, nothing might asswage
His high entente in armes and labour,
So was he ful of leonin corage.

What pris were it to him, though I you told

Of Darius, and an hundred thousand mo,
Of kinges, princes, dukes, erles bold,
Which he conquered, and brought hem into wo?
I say, as fer as man may ride or go
The world was his, what shuld I more devise?
For though I wrote or told you ever mo
Of his knighthode, it mighte not suffice.

Twelf yere he regned, as saith Machabe;
Philippus sone of Macedoine he was,
That first was king in Grece the contree.
O worthy gentil Alexandre, alas
That ever shuld thee fallen swiche a cas!
Enpoisoned of thyn owen folke thou were;
Thy sis fortune hath turned into an as,
And yet for thee ne wept she never a tere.

Who shal me yeven teres to complaine
The deth of gentillesse, and of fraunchise,
That all this world welded in his demaine,
And yet him thought it mighte not suffice?
So ful was his corage of high emprise.
Alas! who shal me helpen to endite
False fortune, and poison to despise?
The whiche two of all this wo I wite.

Julius Cesar.

By wisdome, manhode, and by gret labour,
From humblehede to real majestee
Up rose he Julius the conquerour,
That wan all the occident, by lond and see,
By strengthe of hond, or elles by tretee,
And unto Rome made hem tributarie;
And sith of Rome the emperour was he,
Til that fortune wexe his adversarie.

O mighty Cesar, that in Thessalie
Ageins Pompeius father thin in lawe,
That of the orient had all the chivalrie,
As fer as that the day beginneth dawe,
Thou thurgh thy knighthode hast hem take and slawe,
Save fewe folk, that with Pompeius fledde,
Thurgh which thou put all the orient in awe,
Thanke fortune, that so wel thee spedde.

But now a litel while I wol bewaille
This Pompeius, this noble governour
Of Rome, which that fled at this bataille.
I say, on of his men, a false traitour,
His hed of smote, to winnen him favour
Of Julius, and him the hed he brought:
Alas, Pompeie, of the orient conquerour,
That fortune unto swiche a fin thee brought!

To Rome again repaireth Julius
With his triumphe laureat ful hie,
But on a time Brutus and Cassius,
That ever had of his high estat envie,
Ful prively had made conspiracie
Ageins this Julius in sotil wise:
And cast the place, in which he shulde die
With bodekins, as I shal you devise.

This Julius to the capitolie wente
Upon a day, as he was wont to gon,
And in the capitolie anon him hente
This false Brutus, and his other foon,
And stiked him with bodekins anon
With many a wound, and thus they let him lie:
But never gront he at no stroke but on,
Or elles at two, but if his storie lie.

So manly was this Julius of herte,
And so wel loved estatly honestee,
That though his dedly woundes sore smerte,
His mantel over his hippes caste he,
For no man shulde seen his privetee:
And as he lay of dying in a trance,
And wiste veraily that ded was he,
Of honestee yet had he remembrance.

Lucan, to thee this storie I recommende,
And to Sueton, and Valerie also,
That of this storie writen word and ende:
How that to thise gret conqueroures two
Fortune was first a frend, and sith a fo.
No man ne trust upon hire favour long,
But have hire in await for evermo;
Witnesse on all thise conqueroures strong.

Cresus.

The riche Cresus, whilom king of Lide,
Of whiche Cresus, Cirus sore him dradde,
Yet was he caught amiddes all his pride,
And to be brent men to the fire him ladde:
But swiche a rain doun from the welken shadde,
That slow the fire, and made to him escape:
But to beware no grace yet he hadde,
Til fortune on the galwes made him gape.

Whan he escaped was, he can not stint
For to beginne a newe werre again:
He wened wel, for that fortune him sent
Swiche hap, that he escaped thurgh the rain,
That of his foos he mighte not be slain;
And eke a sweven upon a night he mette,
Of which he was so proud, and eke so fain,
That in vengeance he all his herte sette.

Upon a tree he was, as that him thought,
Ther Jupiter him wesshe, both bak and side;
And Phebus eke a faire towail him brought
To drie him with, and therfore wex his pride.
And to his doughter that stood him beside,
Which that he knew in high science habound,
He bad hire tell him what it signified,
And she his dreme began right thus expound.

The tree (quod she) the galwes is to mene,
And Jupiter betokeneth snow and rain,
And Phebus with his towail clere and clene,
Tho ben the sonnes stremes, soth to sain:
Thou shalt anhanged be, fader, certain;
Rain shal thee wash, and sonne shal thee drie.
Thus warned him ful plat and eke ful plain
His doughter, which that called was Phanie.

Anhanged was Cresus the proude king,
His real trone might him not availle:
Tragedie is non other maner thing,
Ne can in singing crien ne bewaile,
But for that fortune all day wol assaille
With unware stroke the regnes that ben proude:
For whan men trusten hire, than wol she faille,
And cover hire bright face with a cloude.

Peter of Spaine.

O noble, o worthy Petro, glorie of Spaine,
Whom fortune held so high in majestee,
Wel oughten men thy pitous deth complaine.
Out of thy lond thy brother made thee flee,
And after at a sege by sotiltee
Thou were betraied, and lad unto his tent,
Wher as he with his owen hond slow thee,
Succeeding in thy regne and in thy rent.

The feld of snow, with th'egle of blak therin,
Caught with the limerod, coloured as the glede,
He brewed this cursednesse, and all this sinne;
The wicked neste was werker of this dede;
Not Charles Oliver, that toke ay hede
Of trouthe and honour, but of Armorike
Genilon Oliver, corrupt for mede,
Broughte this worthy king in swiche a brike.

Petro, King of Cypre.

O worthy Petro king of Cypre also,
That Alexandrie wan by high maistrie,
Ful many an hethen wroughtest thou ful wo,
Of which thin owen lieges had envie:
And for no thing but for thy chivalrie,

They in thy bed han slain thee by the morwe;
Thus can fortune hire whele governe and gie,
And out of joye bringen men to sorwe.

Barnabo Viscount.

Of Milane grete Barnabo Viscount,
God of delit, and scourge of Lumbardie,
Why shuld I not thin infortune account,
Sith in estat thou clomben were so high?
Thy brothers sone, that was thy double allie,
For he thy nevew was, and sone in lawe,
Within his prison made he thee to die,
But why, ne how, n'ot I that thou were slawe.

Hugelin of Pise.

Of the erl Hugelin of Pise the langour
Ther may no tonge tellen for pitee.
But litel out of Pise stant a tour,
In whiche tour in prison yput was he,
And with him ben his litel children three,
The eldest scarsely five yere was of age:
Alas! fortune, it was gret crueltee
Swiche briddes for to put in swiche a cage.

Dampned was he to die in that prison,
For Roger, which that bishop was of Pise,

Had on him made a false suggestion,
Thurgh which the peple gan upon him rise,
And put him in prison, in swiche a wise,
As ye han herd; and mete and drinke he had
So smale, that wel unnethe it may suffise,
And therwithal it was ful poure and bad.

And on a day befell, that in that houre,
Whan that his mete wont was to be brought,
The gailer shette the dores of the toure;
He hered it wel, but he spake right nought.
And in his herte anon ther fell a thought,
That they for hunger wolden do him dien;
Alas! quod he, alas that I was wrought!
Therwith the teres fellen fro his eyen.

His yonge sone, that three yere was of age,
Unto him said, fader, why do ye wepe?
Whan will the gailer bringen our potage?
Is ther no morsel bred that ye do kepe?
I am so hungry, that I may not slepe.
Now wolde God that I might slepen ever,
Than shuld not hunger in my wombe crepe;
Ther n'is no thing, sauf bred, that me were lever.

Thus day by day this childe began to crie,

Til in his fadres barme adoun it lay,
And saide; farewel, fader, I mote die;
And kist his fader, and dide the same day.
And whan the woful fader did it sey,
For wo his armes two he gan to bite,
And saide, alas! fortune, and wala wa!
Thy false whele my wo all may I wite.

His children wenden, that for hunger it was
That he his armes gnowe, and not for wo,
And sayden: fader, do not so, alas!
But rather ete the flesh upon us two.
Our flesh thou yaf us, take our flesh us fro,
And ete ynough: right thus they to him seide,
And after that, within a day or two,
They laide hem in his lappe adoun, and deide.

Himself dispeired eke for hunger starf.
Thus ended is this mighty Erl of Pise:
From high estat fortune away him carf.
Of this tragedie it ought ynough suffice;
Who so wol here it in a longer wise,
Redeth the grete poete of Itaille,
That highte Dante, for he can it devise
Fro point to point, not o word wol he faille.

THE NONNES PREESTES PROLOGUE.

Ho! quod the knight, good sire, no more of this:
That ye han said, it right ynough ywis,
And mochel more; for litel hevinesse
Is right ynough to mochel folk, I gesse.
I say for me, it is a gret disese,
Wher as men have ben in gret welth and ese,
To heren of hir soden fall, alas!
And the contrary is joye and gret solas,
As whan a man hath ben in poure estat,
And climbeth up, and wexeth fortunat,
And ther abideth in prosperitee:
Swiche thing is gladsom, as it thinketh me,
And of swiche thing were goodly for to telle.
Ye, quod our hoste, by Seint Poules belle,
Ye say right soth; this monk hath clapped loude:
He spake, how fortune covered with a cloude
I wote not what, and als of a tragedie
Right now ye herd: and parde no remedie
It is for to bewailen, ne complaine
That that is don, and als it is a paine,
As ye han said, to here of hevinesse.
Sire monk, no more of this, so God you blesse;
Your tale anoyeth all this compagnie;

Swiche talking is not worth a boterflie,
For therin is ther no disport ne game:
Therfore, sire monk, dan Piers by your name,
I pray you hertely, tell us somwhat elles,
For sikerly, n'ere clinking of your belles,
That on your bridel hange on every side,
By heven king, that for us alle dide,
I shuld er this have fallen doun for slepe,
Although the slough had ben never so depe:
Than hadde your tale all ben tolde in vain.
For certainly, as that thise clerkes sain,
Wher as a man may have non audience,
Nought helpeth it to tellen his sentence.
And wel I wote the substance is in me,
If any thing shal wel reported be.
Sire, say somwhat of hunting, I you pray.
Nay, quod this Monk, I have no lust to play:
Now let another telle as I have told.
Than spake our hoste with rude speche and bold,
And sayd unto the Nonnes Preest anon,
Come nere, thou preest, come hither, thou Sire John,
Telle us swiche thing, as may our hertes glade.
Be blithe, although thou ride upon a jade.
What though thyn horse be bothe foule and lene,
If he wol serve thee, recke thee not a bene:
Loke that thyn herte be mery evermo.

Yes, hoste, quod he, so mote I ride or go,
But I be mery, ywis I wol be blamed.
And right anon his tale he hath attamed;
And thus he said unto us everich on,
This swete preest, this goodly man Sire John.

THE NONNES PREESTES TALE.

A POURE widewe somdel stoupen in age,
Was whilom dwelling in a narwe cotage,
Beside a grove, stonding in a dale.
This widewe, which I tell you of my tale,
Sin thilke day that she was last a wif,
In patience led a ful simple lif.
For litel was hire catel and hire rente:
By husbondry of swiche as God hire sente,
She found hireself, and eke hire doughtren two.
Three large sowes had she, and no mo:
Three kine, and eke a sheep that highte Malle.
Ful sooty was hire boure, and eke hire halle,
In which she ete many a slender mele.
Of poinant sauce ne knew she never a dele.
No deintee morsel passed thurgh hire throte;
Hire diete was accordant to hire cote.
Repletion ne made hire never sike;
Attempre diete was all hire physike,

And exercise, and hertes suffisance.
The goute let hire nothing for to dance,
No apoplexie shente not hire hed.
No win ne dranke she, neyther white ne red:
Hire bord was served most with white and black,
Milk and broun bred, in which she fond no lack,
Seinde bacon, and somtime an ey or twey;
For she was as it were a maner dey.
A yerd she had, enclosed all about
With stickes, and a drie diche without,
In which she had a cok highte Chaunteclere,
In all the land of crowing n'as his pere.
His vois was merier than the mery orgon,
On masse daies that in the chirches gon.
Wel sikerer was his crowing in his loge,
Than is a clok, or any abbey orloge.
By nature he knew eche ascentioun
Of the equinoctial in thilke toun;
For whan degrees fiftene were ascended,
Than crew he, that it might not ben amended.
His combe was redder than the fin corall,
Enbattelled, as it were a castel wall.
His bill was black, and as the jet it shone;
Like asure were his legges and his tone;
His nailes whiter than the lily flour,
And like the burned gold was his colour.

This gentil cok had in his governance
Seven hennes, for to don all his plesance,
Which were his susters and his paramoures,
And wonder like to him, as of coloures.
Of which the fairest hewed in the throte,
Was cleped faire damoselle Pertelote.
Curteis she was, discrete, and debonaire,
And compenable, and bare hireself so faire,
Sithen the day that she was sevennight old,
That trewelich she hath the herte in hold
Of Chaunteclere, loken in every lith:
He loved hire so, that wel was him therwith.
But swiche a joye it was to here hem sing,
Whan that the brighte sonne gan to spring,
In swete accord: my lefe is fare in lond.
For thilke time, as I have understond,
Bestes and briddes couden speke and sing.
And so befell, that in a dawening,
As Chaunteclere among his wives alle
Sate on his perche, that was in the halle,
And next him sate his faire Pertelote,
This Chaunteclere gan gronen in his throte,
As man that in his dreme is dretched sore.
And whan that Pertelote thus herd him rore,
She was agast, and saide, herte dere,
What aileth you to grone in this manere?

Ye ben a veray sleper, fy for shame.
And he answered and sayde thus; madame,
I pray you, that ye take it not agrefe:
By God me mette I was in swiche mischefe
Right now, that yet min herte is sore afright.
Now God (quod he) my sweven recche aright,
And kepe my body out of foule prisoun.
Me mette, how that I romed up and doun
Within our yerde, wher as I saw a beste,
Was like an hound, and wold han made areste
Upon my body, and han had me ded.
His colour was betwix yelwe and red;
And tipped was his tail, and both his eres
With black, unlike the remenant of his heres.
His snout was smal, with glowing eyen twey:
Yet for his loke almost for fere I dey:
This caused me my groning douteles.
Avoy, quod she, fy on you herteles.
Alas! quod she, for by that God above
Now han ye lost myn herte and all my love;
I cannot love a coward by my faith.
For certes, what so any woman saith,
We all desiren, if it mighte be,
To have an husbond, hardy, wise and free,
And secree, and non niggard ne no fool,
Ne him that is agast of every tool,

Ne non avantour by that God above.
How dorsten ye for shame say to your love,
That any thing might maken you aferde?
Han ye no mannes herte, and han a berde?
Alas! and con ye ben agast of swevenis?
Nothing but vanitee, God wote, in sweven is.
Swevenes engendren of repletions,
And oft of fume, and of complexions,
Whan humours ben to habundant in a wight.
Certes this dreme, which ye han met to-night,
Cometh of the grete superfluitee
Of youre rede *colera* parde,
Which causeth folk to dreden in hir dremes
Of arwes, and of fire with rede lemes,
Of rede bestes, that they wol hem bite,
Of conteke, and of waspes gret and lite;
Right as the humour of melancolie
Causeth ful many a man in slepe to crie,
For fere of bolles, and of beres blake,
Or elles that blake devils wol hem take.
Of other humours coud I telle also,
That werken many a man in slepe moch wo:
But I wol passe, as lightly as I can.
Lo Caton, which that was so wise a man,
Said he not thus? Ne do no force of dremes.
Now, Sire, quod she, whan we flee fro the bemes,

For Goddes love, as take som laxatif:
Up peril of my soule, and of my lif,
I conseil you the best, I wol not lie,
That both of coler, and of melancolie
Ye purge you; and for ye shul not tarie,
Though in this toun be non apotecarie,
I shal myself two herbes techen you,
That shal be for your hele, and for your prow;
And in our yerde, the herbes shall I finde,
The which han of hir propretee by kinde
To purgen you benethe, and eke above.
Sire, forgete not this for Goddes love;
Ye ben ful colerike of complexion;
Ware that the sonne in his ascention
Ne finde you not replete of humours hote:
And if it do, I dare wel lay a grote,
That ye shul han a fever tertiane,
Or elles an ague, that may be your bane.
A day or two ye shul han digestives
Of wormes, or ye take your laxatives,
Of laureole, centaurie, and fumetere,
Or elles of ellebor, that groweth there,
Of catapuce, or of gaitre-beries,
Or herbe ive growing in our yerd, that mery is:
Picke hem right as they grow, and ete hem in.
Beth mery, husbond, for your fader kin;

Dredeth no dreme; I can say you no more.
Madame, quod he, *grand mercy* of your lore.
But natheles, as touching dan Caton,
That hath of wisdome swiche a gret renoun,
Though that he bade no dremes for to drede,
By God, men moun in olde bookes rede,
Of many a man, more of auctoritee
Than ever Caton was, so mote I the,
That all the revers sayn of his sentence,
And han wel founden by experience,
That dremes ben significations
As wel of joye, as tribulations,
That folk enduren in this lif present.
Ther nedeth make of this non argument;
The veray preve sheweth it indede.
On of the gretest auctours that men rede,
Saith thus; that whilom twey felawes wente
On pilgrimage in a ful good entente;
And happed so, they came into a toun,
Wher ther was swiche a congregatioun
Of peple, and eke so streit of herbergage,
That they ne founde as moche as a cotage,
In which they bothe might ylogged be:
Wherfore they musten of necessitee,
As for that night, departen compagnie;
And eche of hem goth to his hostelrie,

And toke his logging as it wolde falle.
That on of hem was logged in a stalle,
Fer in a yerd, with oxen of the plough;
That other man was logged wel ynough,
As was his aventure, or his fortune,
That us governeth all, as in commune.
And so befell, that, long or it were day,
This man met in his bed, ther as he lay,
How that his felaw gan upon him calle,
And said, alas! for in an oxes stalle
This night shal I be mordred, ther I lie.
Now helpe me, dere brother, or I die;
In alle haste come to me, he saide.
This man out of his slepe for fere abraide;
But whan that he was waked of his slepe,
He turned him, and toke of this no kepe;
Him thought his dreme was but a vanitee.
Thus twies in his sleping dremed he.
And at the thridde time yet his felaw
Came, as him thought, and said, I now am slaw:
Behold my blody woundes, depe and wide.
Arise up erly, in the morwe tide,
And at the West gate of the toun (quod he)
A carte ful of donge ther shalt thou see,
In which my body is hid prively.
Do thilke carte arresten boldely.

My gold caused my mordre, soth to sain.
And told him every point how he was slain
With a ful pitous face, pale of hewe.
And trusteth wel, his dreme he found ful trewe.
For on the morwe, as sone as it was day,
To his felawes inne he toke his way:
And whan that he came to this oxes stalle,
After his felaw he began to calle.
The hosteler answered him anon,
And saide, Sire, your felaw is agon,
As sone as day he went out of the toun.
This man gan fallen in suspecioun
Remembring on his dremes that he mette,
And forth he goth, no lenger wold he lette,
Unto the West gate of the toun, and fond
A dong carte, as it went for to dong lond,
That was arraied in the same wise
As ye han herde the dede man devise:
And with an hardy herte he gan to crie,
Vengeance and justice of this felonie:
My felaw mordred is this same night,
And in this carte he lith, gaping upright.
I crie out on the ministres, quod he,
That shulden kepe and reulen this citee:
Harow! alas! here lith my felaw slain.
What shuld I more unto this tale sain?

The peple out stert, and cast the cart to ground,
And in the middel of the dong they found
The dede man, that mordred was all newe.
O blisful God, that art so good and trewe,
Lo, how that thou bewreyest mordre alway.
Mordre wol out, that see we day by day.
Mordre is so wlatsom and abhominable
To God, that is so just and resonable,
That he ne wol not suffre it hylled be:
Though it abide a yere, or two, or three,
Mordre wol out, this is my conclusioun.
And right anon, the ministres of the toun
Han hent the carter, and so sore him pined,
And eke the hosteler so sore engined,
That they beknew hir wickednesse anon,
And were anhanged by the necke bon.
Here moun ye see that dremes ben to drede.
And certes in the same book I rede,
Right in the nexte chapitre after this,
(I gabbe not, so have I joye and blis)
Two men that wold han passed over the see
For certain cause in to a fer contree,
If that the wind ne hadde ben contrarie,
That made hem in a citee for to tarie,
That stood ful mery upon an haven side.
But on a day, agein the even tide,

The wind gan change, and blew right as hem lest.
Jolif and glad they wenten to hir rest,
And casten hem ful erly for to saile;
But to that o man fell a gret mervaile.
That on of hem in sleping as he lay,
He mette a wonder dreme, again the day:
Him thought a man stood by his beddes side,
And him commanded, that he shuld abide,
And said him thus; if thou to-morwe wende,
Thou shalt be dreint; my tale is at an ende.
He woke, and told his felaw what he met,
And praied him his viage for to let,
As for that day, he prayd him for to abide.
His felaw that lay by his beddes side,
Gan for to laugh, and scorned him ful faste.
No dreme, quod he, may so my herte agaste,
That I wol leten for to do my thinges.
I sette not a straw by thy dreminges,
For swevens ben but vanitees and japes.
Men dreme al day of oules and of apes,
And eke of many a mase therwithal;
Men dreme of thing that never was, ne shal.
But sith I see that thou wolt here abide,
And thus forslouthen wilfully thy tide,
God wot it reweth me, and have good day.
And thus he took his leve, and went his way.

But or that he had half his cours ysailed,
N'ot I not why, ne what meschance it ailed,
But casuelly the shippes bottom rente,
And ship and man under the water wente
In sight of other shippes ther beside,
That with him sailed at the same tide.
And therfore, faire Pertelote so dere,
By swiche ensamples olde maist thou lere,
That no man shulde be to reccheles
Of dremes, for I say thee douteles,
That many a dreme ful sore is for to drede.
Lo, in the lif of seint Kenelme, I rede,
That was Kenulphus sone, the noble king
Of Mercenrike, how Kenelm mette a thing.
A litel or he were mordred on a day,
His mordre in his avision he say.
His norice him expouned every del
His sweven, and bade him for to kepe him wel
Fro treson; but he n'as but seven yere old,
And therfore litel tale hath he told
Of any dreme, so holy was his herte.
By God I hadde lever than my sherte,
That ye had red his legend, as have I.
Dame Pertelote, I say you trewely,
Macrobius, that writ the avision
In Affrike of the worthy Scipion,

Affirmeth dremes, and sayth that they ben
Warning of thinges, that men after seen.
And forthermore, I pray you loketh wel
In the olde Testament, of Daniel,
If he held dremes any vanitee.
Rede eke of Joseph, and ther shuln ye see
Wher dremes ben somtime (I say not alle)
Warning of thinges that shuln after falle.
Loke of Egipt the king, dan Pharao,
His baker and his boteler also,
Wheder they ne felten non effect in dremes.
Who so wol seken actes of sondry remes,
May rede of dremes many a wonder thing.
Lo Cresus, which that was of Lydie king,
Mette he not that he sat upon a tree,
Which signified he shuld anhanged be?
Lo hire Andromacha, Hectores wif,
That day that Hector shulde lese his lif,
She dremed on the same night beforne,
How that the lif of Hector shuld be lorne,
If thilke day he went into bataille:
She warned him, but it might not availle;
He went forth for to fighten natheles,
And was yslain anon of Achilles.
But thilke tale is al to long to telle,
And eke it is nigh day, I may not dwelle.

Shortly I say, as for conclusion,
That I shal han of this avision
Adversitee: and I say forthermore,
That I ne tell of laxatives no store,
For they ben venimous, I wot it wel:
I hem deffie, I love hem never a del.
But let us speke of mirthe, and stinte all this;
Madame Pertelote, so have I blis,
Of o thing God hath sent me large grace:
For whan I see the beautee of your face,
Ye ben so scarlet red about your eyen,
It maketh all my drede for to dien,
For, al so siker as *In principio,*
Mulier est hominis confusio.
(Madame, the sentence of this Latine is,
Woman is mannes joye and mannes blis.)
For whan I fele a-night your softe side,
Al be it that I may not on you ride,
For that our perche is made so narwe, alas!
I am so ful of joye and of solas,
That I deffie bothe sweven and dreme.
And with that word he flew doun fro the beme,
For it was day, and eke his hennes alle;
And with a chuk he gan hem for to calle,
For he had found a corn, lay in the yerd.
Real he was, he was no more aferd;

He fethered Pertelote twenty time,
And trade hire eke as oft, er it was prime.
He loketh as it were a grim leoun;
And on his toos he rometh up and doun,
Him deigned not to set his feet to ground:
He chukketh, whan he hath a corn yfound,
And to him rennen than his wives alle.

Thus real, as a prince is in his halle,
Leve I this Chaunteclere in his pasture;
And after wol I tell his aventure.

Whan that the month in which the world began,
That highte March, whan God first maked man,
Was complete, and ypassed were also,
Sithen March ended, thritty dayes and two,
Befell that Chaunteclere in all his pride,
His seven wives walking him beside,
Cast up his eyen to the brighte sonne,
That in the signe of Taurus hadde yronne
Twenty degrees and on, and somwhat more:
He knew by kind, and by non other lore,
That it was prime, and crew with blisful steven.
The sonne, he said, is clomben up on heven
Twenty degrees and on, and more ywis.
Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,
Herkeneth thise blisful briddes how they sing,
And see the freshe floures how they spring;

Ful is min herte of revel, and solas.
But sodenly him fell a sorweful cas;
For ever the latter ende of joye is wo:
God wote that worldly joye is sone ago:
And if a rethor coude faire endite,
He in a chronicle might it saufly write,
As for a soveraine notabilitee.
Now every wise man let him herken me:
This story is al so trewe, I undertake,
As is the book of Launcelot du lake,
That women holde in ful gret reverence.
Now wol I turne agen to my sentence.
A col fox, ful of sleigh iniquitee,
That in the grove had wonned yeres three,
By high imagination forecast,
The same night thurghout the hegges brast
Into the yerd, ther Chaunteclere the faire
Was wont, and eke his wives, to repaire:
And in a bedde of wortes stille he lay,
Till it was passed undern of the day,
Waiting his time on Chaunteclere to falle:
As gladly don thise homicides alle,
That in await liggen to mordre men.
O false morderour, rucking in thy den!
O newe Scariot, newe Genelon!
O false dissimulour, o Greek Sinon,

That broughtest Troye al utterly to sorwe!
O Chaunteclere, accursed be the morwe,
That thou into thy yerd flew fro the bemes:
Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes,
That thilke day was perilous to thee.
But what that God forewote most nedes be,
After the opinion of certain clerkes.
Witnesse on him, that any parfit clerk is,
That in scole is gret altercation
In this matere, and gret disputison,
And hath ben of an hundred thousand men.
But I ne cannot boult it to the bren,
As can the holy doctour Augustin,
Or Boece, or the bishop Bradwardin,
Whether that Goddes worthy foreweting
Streineth me nedely for to don a thing,
(Nedely clepe I simple necessitee)
Or elles if free chois be granted me
To do that same thing, or do it nought,
Though God forewot it, or that it was wrought;
Or if his weting streineth never a del,
But by necessitee condicionel.
I wol not han to don of swiche matere;
My tale is of a cok, as ye may here,
That took his conseil of his wif with sorwe
To walken in the yerd upon the morwe,

That he had met the dreme, as I you told.
Womennes conseiles ben ful often cold;
Womannes conseil brought us first to wo,
And made Adam fro paradis to go,
Ther as he was ful mery, and wel at ese.
But for I n'ot, to whom I might displese,
If I conseil of women wolde blame,
Passe over, for I said it in my game.
Rede auctours, wher they trete of swiche matere,
And what they sayn of women ye mown here.
Thise ben the Cokkes wordes, and not mine;
I can non harme of no woman devine.
Faire in the sond, to bath hire merily,
Lith Pertelote, and all hire susters by,
Agein the sonne, and Chaunteclere so free
Sang merier than the Mermaid in the see,
For Phisiologus sayth sikerly,
How that they singen wel and merily.
And so befell that as he cast his eye
Among the wortes on a boterflie,
He was ware of this fox that lay ful low.
Nothing ne list him thanne for to crow,
But cried anon cok, cok, and up he sterte,
As man that was affraied in his herte.
For naturelly a beest desireth flee
Fro his contrarie, if he may it see,

Though he never erst had seen it with his eye.
This Chaunteclere, whan he gan him espie,
He wold han fled, but that the fox anon
Said; gentil sire, alas! what wol ye don?
Be ye affraid of me that am your frend?
Now certes, I were werse than any fend,
If I to you wold harme or vilanie.
I n'am not come your conseil to espie.
But trewely the cause of my coming
Was only for to herken how ye sing:
For trewely ye han as mery a steven,
As any angel hath, that is in heven;
Therwith ye han of musike more feeling,
Than had Boece, or any that can sing.
My lord your fader (God his soule blesse)
And eke your moder of hire gentillesse
Han in myn hous yben, to my gret ese:
And certes, sire, ful fain wold I you plese.
But for men speke of singing, I wol sey,
So mote I brouken wel min eyen twey,
Save you, ne herd I never man so sing,
As did your fader in the morwening.
Certes it was of herte all that he song.
And for to make his vois the more strong,
He wold so peine him, that with both his eyen
He muste winke, so loud he wolde crien,

And stonden on his tiptoon therwithal,
And stretchen forth his necke long and smal.
And eke he was of swiche discretion,
That ther n'as no man in no region,
That him in song or wisdom mighte passe.
I have wel red in dan Burnel the asse
Among his vers, how that ther was a cok,
That, for a preestes sone yave him a knok
Upon his leg, while he was yonge and nice,
He made him for to lese his benefice.
But certain ther is no comparison
Betwix the wisdom and discretion
Of youre fader, and his subtilitee.
Now singeth, sire, for Seinte Charitee,
Let see, can ye your fader contrefete?
  This Chaunteclere his winges gan to bete,
As man that coud not his treson espie,
So was he ravished with his flaterie.
  Alas! ye lordes, many a false flatour
Is in your court, and many a losengeour,
That pleseth you wel more, by my faith,
Than he that sothfastnesse unto you saith.
Redeth Ecclesiast of flaterie,
Beth ware, ye lordes, of hire trecherie.
  This Chaunteclere stood high upon his toos
Stretching his necke, and held his eyen cloos,

And gan to crowen loude for the nones:
And dan Russel the fox stert up at ones,
And by the gargat hente Chaunteclere,
And on his back toward the wood him bere.
For yet ne was ther no man that him sued.
O destinee, that maist not ben eschued!
Alas, that Chaunteclere flew fro the bemes!
Alas, his wif ne raughte not of dremes!
And on a Friday fell all this meschance.
O Venus, that art goddesse of plesance,
Sin that thy servant was this Chaunteclere,
And in thy service did all his powere,
More for delit, than world to multiplie,
Why wolt thou suffre him on thy day to die?
O Gaufride, dere maister soverain,
That, whan thy worthy king Richard was slain
With shot, complainedest his deth so sore,
Why ne had I now thy science and thy lore,
The Friday for to chiden, as did ye?
(For on a Friday sothly slain was he)
Than wold I shew you how that I coud plaine,
For Chauntecleres drede, and for his paine.
Certes swiche cry, ne lamentation
N'as never of ladies made, whan Ilion
Was wonne, and Pirrus with his streite swerd
Whan he had hent king Priam by the berd,

And slain him, (as saith us *Eneidos*)
As maden all the hennes in the cloos,
Whan they had seen of Chaunteclere the sight.
But soverainly dame Pertelote shright,
Ful louder than did Hasdruballes wif,
Whan that hire husbond hadde ylost his lif,
And that the Romaines hadden brent Cartage,
She was so ful of turment and of rage,
That wilfully into the fire she sterte,
And brent hireselven with a stedfast herte.
O woful hennes, right so criden ye,
As, whan that Nero brente the citee
Of Rome, cried the senatoures wives,
For that hir husbonds losten alle hir lives;
Withouten gilt this Nero hath hem slain.
Now wol I turne unto my tale again.
The sely widewe, and hire doughtren two,
Herden thise hennes crie and maken wo,
And out at the dores sterten they anon,
And saw the fox toward the wode is gon,
And bare upon his back the cok away:
They crieden, out! harow and wala wa!
A ha the fox! and after him they ran,
And eke with staves many another man;
Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerlond,
And Malkin, with hire distaf in hire hond;

Ran cow and calf, and eke the veray hogges
So fered were for berking of the dogges,
And shouting of the men and women eke,
They ronnen so, hem thought hir hertes breke.
They yelleden as fendes don in helle:
The dokes crieden as men wold hem quelle:
The gees for fere flewen over the trees,
Out of the hive came the swarme of bees,
So hidous was the noise, a *benedicite!*
Certes he Jakke Straw, and his meinie,
Ne maden never shoutes half so shrille,
Whan that they wolden any Fleming kille,
As thilke day was made upon the fox.
Of bras they broughten beemes and of box,
Of horn and bone, in which they blew and pouped,
And therwithal they shriked and they houped;
It semed, as that the heven shulde falle.

Now, goode men, I pray you herkeneth alle;
Lo, how fortune turneth sodenly
The hope and pride eke of hire enemy.
This cok that lay upon the foxes bake,
In all his drede, unto the fox he spake,
And sayde; sire, if that I were as ye,
Yet wolde I sayn, (as wisly God helpe me)
Turneth agein, ye proude cherles alle;
A veray pestilence upon you falle.

ı I come unto the wodes side,
your hed, the cok shal here abide;
m ete in faith, and that anon.
'ox answered, in faith it shal be don:
he spake the word, al sodenly
: brake from his mouth deliverly,
;h upon a tree he flew anon.
whan the fox saw that the cok was gon,
|uod he, o Chaunteclere, alas!
quod he) ydon to you trespas,
oche as I maked you aferd,
you hente, and brought out of your yerd;
e, I did it in no wikke entente:
oun, and I shal tell you what I mente.
ay sothe to you, God helpe me so.
than, quod he, I shrewe us bothe two.
t I shrewe myself, bothe blood and bones,
begile me oftener than ones.
alt no more thurgh thy flaterie
:o sing and winken with myn eye.
:hat winketh, whan he shulde see,
lly, God let him never the.
quod the fox, but God yeve him meschance,
so indiscrete of governance,
ıgleth, whan that he shuld hold his pees.
hich it is for to be reccheles
;ligent, and trust on flaterie.

But ye that holden this tale a folie,
As of a fox, or of a cok, or hen,
Taketh the moralitee therof, good men.
For Seint Poule sayth, That all that writen is,
To our doctrine it is ywritten ywis.
Taketh the fruit, and let the chaf be stille.
  Now, goode God, if that it be thy wille,
As sayth my Lord, so make us all good men;
And bring us to thy highe blisse. *Amen.*

  Sire Nonnes Preest, our hoste sayd anon,
Yblessed be thy breche and every ston;
This was a mery tale of Chaunteclere.
But by my trouthe, if thou were seculere,
Thou woldest ben a tredefoule a right:
For if thou have corage as thou hast might,
Thee were nede of hennes, as I wene,
Ye mo than seven times seventene.
Se, whiche braunes hath this gentil preest,
So gret a necke, and swiche a large breest!
He loketh as a sparhauk with his eyen;
Him nedeth not his colour for to dien
With Brasil, ne with grain of Portingale.
  But, sire, faire falle you for your tale.
And after that, he with ful mery chere
Sayd to another, as ye shulen here.

* * * * * * * *

THE SECOND NONNES TALE.

THE ministre and the norice unto vices,
Which that men clepe in English idelnesse,
That porter at the gate is of delices,
To eschuen, and by hire contrary hire oppresse,
That is to sain, by leful besinesse,
Wel oughte we to don al our entente,
Lest that the fend thurgh idelnesse us hente.

For he that with his thousand cordes slie
Continuelly us waiteth to beclappe,
Whan he may man in idelnesse espie,
He can so lightly cacche him in his trappe,
Til that a man be hent right by the lappe,
He n'is not ware the fend hath him in hond:
Wel ought us werche, and idelnesse withstond.

And though men dradden never for to die,
Yet see men wel by reson douteles,
That idelnesse is rote of slogardie,
Of which ther never cometh no good encrees,
And see that slouthe holdeth hem in a lees,
Only to slepe, and for to ete and drinke,
And to devouren all that other swinke.

And for to put us from swiche idelnesse,
That cause is of so gret confusion,
I have here don my feithful besinesse
After the Legende in translation
Right of thy glorious lif and passion,
Thou with thy gerlond, wrought of rose and lilie,
Thee mene I, maid and martir Seinte Cecilie.

And thou, that arte floure of virgines all,
Of whom that Bernard list so wel to write,
To thee at my beginning first I call,
Thou comfort of us wretches, do me endite
Thy maidens deth, that wan thurgh hire merite
The eternal lif, and over the fend victorie,
As man may after reden in hire storie.

Thou maide and mother, doughter of thy son,
Thou well of mercy, sinful soules cure,
In whom that God of bountee chees to won;
Thou humble and high over every creature,
Thou nobledest so fer forth our nature,
That no desdaine the maker had of kinde
His son in blood and flesh to clothe and winde.

Within the cloystre blisful of thy sides,
Toke mannes shape the eternal love and pees,

That of the trine compas Lord and gide is,
Whom erthe, and see, and heven out of relees
Ay herien; and thou, virgine wemmeles,
Bare of thy body (and dweltest maiden pure)
The creatour of every creature.

Assembled is in thee magnificence
With mercy, goodnesse, and with swiche pitee,
That thou, that art the sonne of excellence,
Not only helpest hem that praien thee,
But oftentime of thy benignitee
Ful freely, or that men thin helpe beseche,
Thou goest beforne, and art hir lives leche.

Now helpe, thou meke and blisful faire maide,
Me flemed wretch, in this desert of galle;
Thinke on the woman Cananee, that saide
That whelpes eten som of the cromes alle
That from hir Lordes table ben yfalle;
And though that I, unworthy sone of Eve,
Be sinful, yet accepteth my beleve.

And for that feith is ded withouten werkes,
So for to werken yeve me wit and space,
That I be quit from thennes that most derke is;
O thou, that art so faire and ful of grace,

Be thou min advocat in that high place,
Ther as withouten ende is songe Osanne,
Thou Cristes mother, doughter dere of Anne.

And of thy light my soule in prison light,
That troubled is by the contagion
Of my body, and also by the wight
Of erthly lust, and false affection:
O haven of refute, o salvation
Of hem that ben in sorwe and in distresse,
Now help, for to my werk I wol me dresse.

Yet pray I you that reden that I write,
Foryeve me, that I do no diligence
This ilke storie subtilly to endite.
For both have I the wordes and sentence
Of him, that at the seintes reverence
The storie wrote, and folowed hire legende,
And pray you that ye wol my werk amende.

First wol I you the name of Seinte Cecilie
Expoune, as men may in hire storie see:
It is to sayn in English, Hevens lilie,
For pure chastnesse of virginitee,
Or for she whitnesse had of honestee,

And grene of conscience, and of good fame
The swote savour, Lilie was hire name.

Or Cecilie is to sayn, the way to blinde,
For she ensample was by good teching;
Or elles Cecilie, as I writen finde,
Is joined by a maner conjoining
Of heven and *Lia*, and here in figuring
The heven is set for thought of holinesse,
And *Lia*, for hire lasting besinesse.

Cecilie may eke be sayd in this manere,
Wanting of blindnesse, for hire grete light
Of sapience, and for hire thewes clere.
Or elles lo, this maidens name bright
Of heven and *Leos* cometh, for which by right
Men might hire wel the heven of peple calle,
Ensample of good and wise werkes alle:

For *Leos* peple in English is to say;
And right as men may in the heven see
The sonne and mone, and sterres every way,
Right so men gostly, in this maiden free
Sawen of faith the magnanimitee,
And eke the clerenesse hole of sapience,
And sondry werkes, bright of excellence.

And right so as thise Philosophres write,
That heven is swift and round, and eke brenning,
Right so was faire Cecilie the white
Ful swift and besy in every good werking,
And round and hole in good persevering,
And brenning ever in charitee ful bright:
Now have I you declared what she hight.

This maiden bright Cecile, as hire lif saith,
Was come of Romaines and of noble kind,
And from hire cradle fostred in the faith
Of Crist, and bare his Gospel in hire mind:
She never cesed, as I writen find,
Of hire prayere, and God to love and drede,
Beseching him to kepe hire maidenhede.

And whan this maiden shuld until a man
Ywedded be, that was ful yonge of age,
Which that ycleped was Valerian,
And day was comen of hire marriage,
She ful devout and humble in hire corage,
Under hire robe of gold, that sat ful faire,
Had next hire flesh yclad hire in an haire.

And while that the organs maden melodie,
To God alone thus in hire hert song she:

O Lord, my soule and eke my body gie
Unwemmed, lest that I confounded be.
And for his love that died upon the tree,
Every second or thridde day she fast,
Ay bidding in hire orisons ful fast.

The night came, and to bedde must she gon
With hire husbond, as it is the manere,
And prively she said to him anon;
O swete and wel beloved spouse dere,
Ther is a conseil, and ye wol it here,
Which that right fayn I wold unto you saie,
So that ye swere, ye wol it not bewraie.

Valerian gan fast unto hire swere,
That for no cas, ne thing that mighte be,
He shulde never to non bewraien here;
And than at erst thus to him saide she;
I have an Angel which that loveth me,
That with gret love, wher so I wake or slepe,
Is redy ay my body for to kepe;

And if that he may felen out of drede,
That ye me touch or love in vilanie,
He right anon wol sleen you with the dede,
And in your youthe thus ye shulden die.

And if that ye in clene love me gie,
He wol you love as me, for your clenenesse,
And shew to you his joye and his brightnesse.

This Valerian, corrected as God wold,
Answerd again, if I shal trusten thee,
Let me that angel seen, and him behold;
And if that it a veray angel be,
Than wol I don as thou hast prayed me;
And if thou love another man, forsothe
Right with this swerd than wol I slee you bothe.

Cecile answerd anon right in this wise;
If that you list, the angel shul ye see,
So that ye trowe on Crist, and you baptise;
Goth forth to Via Apia (quod she)
That fro this toun ne stant but miles three,
And to the poure folkes that ther dwellen
Say hem right thus, as that I shal you tellen.

Tell hem, that I Cecile you to hem sent
To shewen you the good Urban the old,
For secree nedes, and for good entent;
And whan that ye Seint Urban han behold,
Tell him the wordes whiche I to you told;
And whan that he hath purged you fro sinne,
Than shal ye seen that angel er ye twinne.

Valerian is to the place gon,
And right as he was taught by hire lerning,
He fond this holy old Urban anon
Among the seintes buriels louting:
And he anon withouten tarying
Did his message, and whan that he it tolde,
Urban for joye his hondes gan upholde.

The teres from his eyen let he falle;
Almighty Lord, o Jesu Crist, quod he,
Sower of chast conseil, hierde of us alle,
The fruit of thilke seed of chastitee
That thou hast sow in Cecile, take to thee:
Lo, like a besy bee withouten gile
Thee serveth ay thin owen thral Cecile.

For thilke spouse, that she toke but newe
Ful like a fiers leon, she sendeth here
As meke as ever was any lambe to ewe.
And with that word anon ther gan apere
An old man, clad in white clothes clere,
That had a book with lettres of gold in hond,
And gan beforne Valerian to stond.

Valerian, as ded, fell doun for drede,
Whan he him saw; and he up hent him tho,

And on his book right thus he gan to rede;
On Lord, on faith, on God withouten mo,
On Cristendom, and fader of all also
Aboven all, and over all every wher:
Thise wordes all with gold ywritten were.

Whan this was red, than said this olde man,
Levest thou this thing or no? say ye or nay.
I leve all this thing, quod Valerian,
For sother thing than this, I dare wel say,
Under the heven no wight thinken may.
Tho vanished the olde man, he n'iste wher,
And pope Urban him cristened right ther.

Valerian goth home, and fint Cecilie
Within his chambre with an angel stonde:
This angel had of roses and of lilie
Corones two, the which he bare in honde,
And first to Cecile, as I understonde,
He yaf that on, and after gan he take
That other to Valerian hire make.

With body clene, and with unwemmed thought,
Kepeth ay wel thise corones two, quod he,
From paradis to you I have hem brought,
Ne never mo ne shul they roten be,

Ne lese hir swete savour, trusteth me,
Ne never wight shal seen hem with his eye,
But he be chaste, and hate vilanie.

And thou, Valerian, for thou so sone
Assentedest to good conseil, also
Say what thee list, and thou shalt han thy bone.
I have a brother, quod Valerian tho,
That in this world I love no man so,
I pray you that my brother may have grace
To know the trouth, as I do in this place.

The angel sayd; God liketh thy request,
And bothe with the palme of martirdome
Ye shullen come unto his blisful rest.
And with that word, Tiburce his brother come.
And whan that he the savour undernome,
Which that the roses and the lilies cast,
Within his herte he gan to wonder fast,

And said; I wonder this time of the yere
Whennes that swete savour cometh so
Of roses and lilies, that I smelle here;
For though I had hem in min hondes two,
The savour might in me no deper go:
The swete smel, that in min herte I find,
Hath changed me all in another kind.

Valerian saide; two corones han we
Snow-white and rose-red, that shinen clere,
Which that thin eyen han no might to see:
And as thou smellest hem thurgh my praiere,
So shalt thou seen hem, leve brother dere,
If it so be thou wolt withouten slouthe
Beleve aright, and know the veray trouthe.

Tiburce answered; saiest thou this to me
In sothnesse, or in dreme herken I this?
In dremes, quod Valerian, han we be
Unto this time, brother min, ywis:
But now at erst in trouthe our dwelling is.
How wost thou this, quod Tiburce, in what wise?
Quod Valerian; that shal I thee devise.

The angel of God hath me the trouth ytaught,
Which thou shalt seen, if that thou wilt reney
The idoles, and be clene, and elles naught.
[And of the miracle of thise corones twey
Seint Ambrose in his preface list to sey;
Solempnely this noble doctour dere
Commendeth it, and saith in this manere.

The palme of martirdome for to receive,
Seinte Cecilie, fulfilled of Goddes yeft,

The world and eke hire chambre gan she weive;
Witnesse Tiburces and Ceciles shrift,
To which God of his bountee wolde shift
Corones two, of floures wel smelling,
And made his angel hem the corones bring.

The maid hath brought thise men to blisse above;
The world hath wist what it is worth certain
Devotion of chastitee to love.]
Tho shewed him Cecile all open and plain,
That all idoles n'is but a thing in vain,
For they ben dombe, and therto they ben deve,
And charged him his idoles for to leve.

Who so that troweth not this, a best he is,
Quod this Tiburce, if that I shal not lie.
And she gan kisse his brest whan she herd this,
And was ful glad he coude trouth espie:
This day I take thee for min allie,
Saide this blisful faire maiden dere;
And after that she said as ye may here.

Lo, right so as the love of Crist (quod she)
Made me thy brothers wif, right in that wise
Anon for mine allie here take I thee,
Sithen that thou wolt thin idoles despise.

Goth with thy brother now and thee baptise,
And make thee clene, so that thou maist behold
The angels face, of which thy brother told.

Tiburce answered, and saide; brother dere,
First tell me whither I shal, and to what man.
To whom? quod he; come forth with goode chere,
I wol thee lede unto the pope Urban.
To Urban? brother min Valerian,
Quod tho Tiburce, wilt thou me thider lede?
Me thinketh that it were a wonder dede.

Ne menest thou not Urban (quod he tho)
That is so often damned to be ded,
And woneth in halkes alway to and fro,
And dare not ones putten forth his hed?
Men shuld him brennen in a fire so red,
If he were found, or that men might him spie,
And we also, to bere him compagnie.

And while we seken thilke divinitee,
That is yhid in heven prively,
Algate ybrent in this world shuld we be.
To whom Cecile answered boldely;
Men mighten dreden wel and skilfully
This lif to lese, min owen dere brother,
If this were living only and non other.

But ther is better lif in other place,
That never shal be lost, ne drede thee nought:
Which Goddes sone us tolde thurgh his grace,
That fadres sone which alle thinges wrought;
And all that wrought is with a skilful thought,
The gost, that from the fader gan procede,
Hath souled hem withouten any drede.

By word and by miracle he Goddes sone,
Whan he was in this world, declared here,
That ther is other lif ther men may wone.
To whom answerd Tiburce; o suster dere,
Ne saidest thou right now in this manere,
Ther n'as but o God, lord in sothfastnesse,
And now of three how mayst thou bere witnesse?

That shal I tell, quod she, or that I go.
Right as a man hath sapiences three,
Memorie, engine, and intellect also,
So in o being of divinitee
Three persones mowen ther righte wel be.
Tho gan she him ful besily to preche
Of Cristes sonde, and of his peines teche,

And many pointes of his passion;
How Goddes sone in this world was withhold

To don mankinde pleine remission,
That was ybound in sinne and cares cold.
All this thing she unto Tiburce told,
And after this Tiburce in good entent,
With Valerian to pope Urban he went,

That thanked God, and with glad herte and light
He cristened him, and made him in that place
Parfite in his lerning and Goddes knight.
And after this Tiburce gat swiche grace,
That every day he saw in time and space
The angel of God, and every maner bone
That he God axed, it was sped ful sone.

It were ful hard by ordre for to sain
How many wonders Jesus for hem wrought.
But at the last, to tellen short and plain,
The sergeaunts of the toun of Rome hem sought,
And hem before Almache the prefect brought,
Which hem apposed, and knew all hire entent,
And to the image of Jupiter hem sent;

And said; who so wol nought do sacrifice,
Swap of his hed, this is my sentence here.
Anon thise martyrs, that I you devise,
On Maximus, that was an officere

Of the prefectes, and his corniculere,
Hem hent, and whan he forth the seintes lad,
Himself he wept for pitee that he had.

Whan Maximus had herd the seintes lore,
He gate him of the turmentoures leve,
And lad hem to his hous withouten more;
And with hir preching, or that it were eve,
They gonnen fro the turmentours to reve,
And fro Maxime, and fro his folk eche on
The false faith, to trowe in God alone.

Cecilie came, whan it was waxen night,
With preestes, that hem cristened all yfere;
And afterward, whan day was waxen light,
Cecilie hem said with a ful stedfast chere;
Now, Cristes owen knightes leve and dere,
Caste all away the werkes of derkenesse,
And armeth you in armes of brightnesse.

Ye han forsoth ydon a gret bataille;
Your cours is don, your faith han ye conserved;
Goth to the croune of lif that may not faille;
The rightful juge, which that ye han served,
Shal yeve it you, as ye han it deserved.
And whan this thing was said, as I devise,
Men ledde hem forth to don the sacrifice.

But whan they weren to the place ybrought, 15861
To tellen shortly the conclusioun,
They n'olde encense, ne sacrifice right nought,
But on hir knees they setten hem adoun,
With humble herte and sad devotioun,
And losten bothe hir hedes in the place;
Hir soules wenten to the king of grace.

This Maximus, that saw this thing betide, 15868
With pitous teres told it anon right,
That he hir soules saw to heven glide
With angels, ful of clerenesse and of light;
And with his word converted many a wight.
For which Almachius did him to-bete
With whip of led, til he his lif gan lete.

Cecile him toke, and buried him anon 15875
By Tiburce and Valerian softely,
Within hir burying place, under the ston.
And after this Almachius hastily
Bad his ministres fetchen openly
Cecile, so that she might in his presence
Don sacrifice, and Jupiter encense.

But they converted at hire wise lore
Wepten ful sore, and yaven ful credence 15883

Unto hire word, and crieden more and more;
Crist, Goddes sone, withouten difference
Is veray God, this is all our sentence,
That hath so good a servant him to serve:
Thus with o vois we trowen though we sterve.

Almachius, that herd of this doing,
Bad fetchen Cecile, that he might hire see:
And alderfirst, lo, this was his axing;
What maner woman arte thou? quod he.
I am a gentilwoman borne, quod she.
I axe thee, quod he, though it thee greve,
Of thy religion and of thy beleve.

Why than began your question folily,
Quod she, that woldest two answers conclude
In o demand? ye axen lewedly.
Almache answerd to that similitude,
Of whennes cometh thin answering so rude?
Of whennes? (quod she, whan that she was freined)
Of conscience, and of good faith unfeined.

Almachius said; ne takest thou non hede
Of my power? and she him answerd this;
Your might (quod she) ful litel is to drede;
For every mortal mannes power n'is

But like a bladder ful of wind ywis:
For with a nedles poiut, whan it is blow,
May all the bost of it be laid ful low.

Ful wrongfully begonnest thou, (quod he)
And yet in wrong is al thy perseverance:
Wost thou not how our mighty princes free
Have thus commanded and made ordinance,
That every cristen wight shal han penance
But if that he his Cristendome withseye,
And gon al quite, if he wol it reneye?

Your princes erren, as your nobley doth,
Quod tho Cecile, and with a wood sentence
Ye make us gilty, and it is not soth:
For ye that knowen wel our innocence,
For as moche as we don ay reverence
To Crist, and for we bere a Cristen name,
Ye put on us a crime and eke a blame.

But we that knowen thilke name so
For vertuous, we may it not withseye.
Almache answered; chese on of thise two,
Do sacrifice, or Cristendom reneye,
That thou mow now escapen by that wey.
At which this holy blisful fayre maid
Gan for to laughe, and to the juge said:

O juge confuse in thy nicetee,
Woldest thou that I reneye innocence?
To maken me a wicked wight (quod she)
Lo, he dissimuleth here in audience,
He stareth and wodeth in his advertence.
To whom Almachius said; Unsely wretch,
Ne wost thou not how far my might may stretch?

Han not our mighty princes to me yeven
Ya bothe power and eke auctoritee
To maken folk to dien or to liven?
Why spekest thou so proudly than to me?
I ne speke nought but stedfastly, quod she,
Not proudely, for I say, as for my side,
We haten dedly thilke vice of pride.

And if thou drede not a soth for to here,
Than wol I shewe al openly by right,
That thou hast made a ful gret lesing here.
Thou saist, thy princes han thee yeven might
Both for to slee and for to quiken a wight,
Thou that ne maist but only lif bereve,
Thou hast non other power ne no leve.

But thou maist sayn, thy princes han thee maked
Ministre of deth; for if thou speke of mo,

Thou liest; for thy power is ful naked.
Do way thy boldnesse, said Almachius tho,
And sacrifice to our goddes, er thou go.
I recke not what wrong that thou me proffre,
For I can suffre it as a philosophre.

But thilke wronges may I not endure,
That thou spekest of our goddes here, quod he.
Cecile answerd; o nice creature,
Thou saidest no word sin thou spake to me,
That I ne knew therwith thy nicetee,
And that thou were in every maner wise
A lewed officer, a vain justice.

Ther lacketh nothing to thin utter eyen
That thou n'art blind; for thing that we seen alle
That is a ston, that men may wel espien,
That ilke ston a god thou wolt it calle.
I rede thee let thin hond upon it falle,
And tast it wel, and ston thou shalt it find,
Sin that thou seest not with thin eyen blind.

It is a shame that the peple shal
So scornen thee, and laugh at thy folie:
For comunly men wot it wel over al,
That mighty God is in his hevens hie;

And thise images, wel maist thou espie,
To thee ne to hemself may not profite,
For in effect they be not worth a mite.

Thise and swiche other wordes saide she,
And he wex wroth, and bade men shuld hire lede
Home til hire house, and in hire hous (quod he)
Brenne hire right in a bath, with flames rede.
And as he bade, right so was don the dede;
For in a bathe they gonne hire faste shetten,
And night and day gret fire they under betten.

The longe night, and eke a day also,
For all the fire, and eke the bathes hete,
She sate al cold, and felt of it no wo,
It made hire not a drope for to swete:
But in that bath hire lif she muste lete.
For he Almache, with a ful wicke entent,
To sleen hire in the bath his sonde sent.

Three strokes in the nekke he smote hire tho
The turmentour, but for no maner chance
He mighte not smite all hire nekke atwo:
And for ther was that time an ordinance
That no man shulde don man swiche penance
The fourthe stroke to smiten, soft or sore,
This turmentour ne dorste do no more;

But half ded, with hire nekke ycorven ther
He left hire lie, and on his way is went.
The cristen folk, which that about hire were,
With shetes han the blood ful faire yhent:
Three dayes lived she in this turment,
And never cesed hem the faith to teche,
That she had fostred hem, she gan to preche.

And hem she yaf hire mebles and hire thing,
And to the pope Urban betoke hem tho,
And said; I axed this of heven king,
To have respit three dayes and no mo,
To recommend to you, or that I go,
Thise soules lo, and that I might do werche
Here of min hous perpetuellich a cherche.

Seint Urban, with his dekenes prively
The body fette, and buried it by night
Among his other seintes honestly:
Hire hous the cherche of seinte Cecile hight;
Seint Urban halowed it, as he wel might,
In which unto this day in noble wise
Men don to Crist and to his seinte servise.

THE CHANONES YEMANNES PROLOGUE.

WHAN that tolde was the lif of seinte Cecile,
Er we had ridden fully five mile,
At Boughton under Blee us gan atake
A man, that clothed was in clothes blake,
And undernethe he wered a white surplis.
His hakeney, which that was al pomelee gris,
So swatte, that it wonder was to see,
It semed as he had priked miles three.
The horse eke that his yeman rode upon,
So swatte, that unnethes might he gon.
About the peytrel stood the fome ful hie,
He was of fome as flecked as a pie.
A male tweifold on his croper lay,
It semed that he caried litel array,
Al light for sommer rode this worthy man.
And in my herte wondren I began
What that he was, til that I understode,
How that his cloke was sowed to his hode;
For which whan I had long avised me,
I demed him some chanon for to be.
His hat heng at his back doun by a las,
For he had ridden more than trot or pas,
He had ay priked like as he were wode.

A clote-lefe he had laid under his hode
For swete, and for to kepe his hed fro hete.
But it was joye for to seen him swete;
His forehed dropped, as a stillatorie
Were ful of plantaine or of paritorie.
And whan that he was come, he gan to crie,
God save (quod he) this joly compagnie.
Fast have I priked (quod he) for your sake,
Because that I wolde you atake,
To riden in this mery compagnie.
  His yeman was eke ful of curtesie,
And saide; Sires, now in the morwe tide
Out of your hostelrie I saw you ride,
And warned here my lord and soverain,
Which that to riden with you is ful fain,
For his disport; he loveth daliance.
Frend, for thy warning God yeve thee good chance,
Than said our hoste; certain it wolde seme
Thy lord were wise, and so I may wel deme;
He is ful joconde also dare I leye:
Can he ought tell a mery tale or tweie,
With which he gladen may this compagnie?
  Who, sire? my lord? Ye, sire, withouten lie,
He can of mirth and eke of jolitee
Not but ynough; also, sire, trusteth me,
And ye him knew al so wel as do I,

Ye wolden wondre how wel and craftily
He coude werke, and that in sondry wise.
He hath take on him many a gret emprise,
Which were ful harde for any that is here
To bring about, but they of him it lere.
As homely as he rideth amonges you,
If ye him knew, it wold be for your prow:
Ye wolden not forgon his acquaintance
For mochel good, I dare lay in balance
All that I have in my possession.
He is a man of high discression,
I warne you wel, he is a passing man.
  Wel, quod our hoste, I pray thee tell me than,
Is he a clerk, or non? tell what he is.
  Nay, he is greter than a clerk ywis,
Saide this yeman, and in wordes fewe,
Hoste, of his craft somwhat I wol you shewe.
  I say, my lord can swiche a subtiltee,
(But all his craft ye moun not wete of me,
And somwhat help I yet to his werking)
That all the ground on which we ben riding
Til that we come to Canterbury toun,
He coud al clene turnen up so doun,
And pave it all of silver and of gold.
  And whan this yeman had this tale ytolde
Unto our hoste, he said; *benedicite*,

This thing is wonder mervaillous to me,
Sin that thy lord is of so high prudence,
Because of which men shulde him reverence,
That of his worship rekketh he so lite;
His overest sloppe it is not worth a mite
As in effect to him, so mote I go;
It is all baudy and to-tore also.
Why is thy lord so sluttish I thee preye,
And is of power better cloth to beye,
If that his dede acorded with thy speche?
Telle me that, and that I thee beseche.
  Why? quod this yeman, wherto axe ye me?
God helpe me so, for he shal never the:
(But I wol not avowen that I say,
And therfore kepe it secree I you pray)
He is to wise in faith, as I beleve.
Thing that is overdon, it wol not preve
Aright, as clerkes sain, it is a vice;
Wherfore in that I hold him lewed and nice.
For whan a man hath overgret a wit,
Ful oft him happeth to misusen it:
So doth my lord, and that me greveth sore.
God it amende, I can say now no more.
  Therof no force, good yeman, quod our host,
Sin of the conning of thy lord thou wost,
Telle how he doth, I pray thee hertily,

Sin that he is so crafty and so sly.
Wher dwellen ye, if it to tellen be?
In the subarbes of a toun, quod he,
Lurking in hernes and in lanes blinde,
Wheras thise robbours and thise theves by kinde
Holden hir privee fereful residence,
As they that dare not shewen hir presence,
So faren we, if I shal say the sothe.
Yet, quod our hoste, let me talken to the;
Why art thou so discoloured of thy face?
Peter, quod he, God yeve it harde grace,
I am so used the hote fire to blow,
That it hath changed my colour I trow;
I n'am not wont in no mirrour to prie,
But swinke sore, and lerne to multiplie.
We blundren ever, and poren in the fire,
And for all that we faille of our desire,
For ever we lacken our conclusion.
To mochel folk we don illusion,
And borwe gold, be it a pound or two,
Or ten or twelve, or many sommes mo,
And make hem wenen at the leste wey,
That of a pound we connen maken twey,
Yet is it false; and ay we han good hope
It for to don, and after it we grope:
But that science is so fer us beforne,

We mowen not, although we had it sworne,
It overtake, it slit away so fast;
It wol us maken beggers at the last.
While this yeman was thus in his talking,
This Chanon drow him nere, and herd all thing
Which this yeman spake, for suspecion
Of mennes speche ever had this Chanon:
For Caton sayth, that he that gilty is,
Demeth all thing be spoken of him ywis:
That was the cause, he gan so nigh him drawe
To his yeman, to herken all his sawe,
And thus he saide unto his yeman tho;
Hold thou thy pees, and speke no wordes mo:
For if thou do, thou shalt it dere abie.
Thou sclaundrest me here in this compagnie,
And eke discoverest that thou shuldest hide.
Ye, quod our hoste, tell on, what so betide;
Of all his thretening recke not a mite.
In faith, quod he, no more I do but lite.
And whan this Chanon saw it wold not be,
But his yeman wold tell his privetee,
He fled away for veray sorwe and shame.
A, quod the yeman, here shal rise a game:
All that I can anon I wol you telle,
Sin he is gon; the foule fend him quelle;
For never hereafter wol I with him mete.

For peny ne for pound, I you behete.
He that me broughte first unto that game,
Er that he die, sorwe have he and shame.
For it it is ernest to me by faith;
That fele I wel, what that any man saith;
And yet for all my smert, and all my grief,
For all my sorwe, labour, and meschief,
I coude never leve it in no wise.
Now wolde God my wit mighte suffice
To tellen all that longeth to that art;
But natheles, yet wol I tellen part;
Sin that my lord is gon, I wol not spare,
Swiche thing as that I know, I wol declare.

THE CHANONES YEMANNES TALE.

With this Chanon I dwelt have seven yere,
And of his science am I never the nere:
All that I had, I have ylost therby,
And God wot, so han many mo than I.
Ther I was wont to be right fresh and gay
Of clothing, and of other good array,
Now may I were an hose upon min hed;
And wher my colour was both fresh and red,
Now is it wan, and of a leden hewe;
(Who so it useth, so shal he it rewe)

And of my swinke yet blered is min eye;
Lo which avantage is to multiplie!
That sliding science hath me made so bare,
That I have no good, wher that ever I fare;
And yet I am endetted so therby
Of gold, that I have borwed trewely,
That while I live, I shal it quiten never;
Let every man be ware by me for ever.
What maner man that casteth him therto,
If he continue, I hold his thrift ydo;
So help me God, therby shal he nat winne,
But empte his purse, and make his wittes thinne.
And whan he, thurgh his madnesse and folie,
Hath lost his owen good thurgh jupartie,
Than he exciteth other folk therto,
To lese hir good as he himself hath do.
For unto shrewes joye it is and ese
To have hir felawes in peine and disese.
Thus was I ones lerned of a clerk;
Of that no charge; I wol speke of our werk.
Whan we be ther as we shuln exercise
Our elvish craft, we semen wonder wise,
Our termes ben so clergial and queinte.
I blow the fire til that myn herte feinte.
What shuld I tellen eche proportion
Of thinges, whiche that we werchen upon,

As on five or six unces, may wel be,
Of silver, or som other quantitee?
And besie me to tellen you the names,
As orpiment, brent bones, yren squames,
That into poudre grounden ben ful smal?
And in an erthen pot how put is al,
And salt yput in, and also pepere,
Beforn thise poudres that I speke of here,
And wel ycovered with a lampe of glas?
And of moche other thing which that ther was?
And of the pottes and glasses engluting,
That of the aire might passen out no thing?
And of the esy fire, and smert also,
Which that was made? and of the care and wo,
That we had in our materes subliming,
And in amalgaming, and calcening
Of quiksilver, ycleped mercurie crude?
For all our sleightes we can not conclude.
Our orpiment, and sublimed mercurie,
Our grounden litarge eke on the porphurie,
Of eche of thise of unces a certain
Not helpeth us, our labour is in vain.
Ne, neyther our spirites ascentioun,
Ne our materes that lien al fix adoun,
Mown in our werking nothing us availle;
For lost is all our labour and travaille,

And all the cost a twenty devil way
Is lost also, which we upon it lay.
Ther is also ful many another thing,
That is unto our craft apperteining,
Though I by ordre hem nat rehersen can,
Because that I am a lewed man,
Yet wol I telle hem, as they come to minde,
Though I ne cannot set hem in hir kinde,
As bole armoniak, verdegrese, boras;
And sondry vessels made of erthe and glas,
Our urinales, and our descensories,
Viols, croslettes, and sublimatories,
Cucurbites, and alembikes eke,
And other swiche gere, dere ynough a leke,
What nedeth it for to reherse hem alle?
Wateres rubifying, and bolles galle,
Arsenik, sal armoniak, and brimston?
And herbes coude I tell eke many on,
As egremoine, valerian, and lunarie,
And other swiche, if that me list to tarie;
Our lampes brenning bothe night and day,
To bring about our craft if that we may;
Our fourneis eke of calcination,
And of wateres albification,
Unslekked lime, chalk, and gleire of an ey,
Poudres divers, ashes, dong, pisse, and cley,

Sered pokettes, sal peter, and vitriole;
And divers fires made of wode and cole;
Sal tartre, alcaly, and salt preparat,
And combust materes, and coagulat;
Cley made with hors and mannes here, and oile
Of tartre, alum, glas, berme, wort, and argoile,
Rosalgar, and other materes enbibing;
And eke of our materes encorporing,
And of our silver citrination,
Our cementing, and fermentation,
Our ingottes, testes, and many thinges mo.
I wol you tell as was me taught also
The foure spirites, and the bodies sevene
By ordre, as oft I herd my lord hem nevene.
The firste spirit quiksilver cleped is;
The second orpiment; the thridde ywis
Sal armoniak, and the fourth brimston.
The bodies sevene eke, lo hem here anon.
Sol gold is, and Luna silver we threpe;
Mars iren, Mercurie quiksilver we clepe:
Saturnus led, and Jupiter is tin,
And Venus coper, by my fader kin.
This cursed craft who so wol exercise,
He shal no good have, that him may suffice,
For all the good he spendeth theraboute
He lesen shal, therof have I no doute.

Who so that listeth uttren his folie,
Let him come forth and lernen multiplie:
And every man that hath ought in his cofre,
Let him appere, and wex a philosophre,
Ascaunce that craft is so light to lere.
Nay, nay, God wot, al be he monk or frere,
Preest or chanon, or any other wight,
Though he sit at his book both day and night
In lerning of this elvish nice lore,
All is in vain, and parde mochel more
To lerne a lewed man this subtiltee;
Fie, speke not therof, for it wol not be.
And conne he letterure, or conne he non,
As in effect, he shal finde it all on;
For bothe two by my salvation
Concluden in multiplication
Ylike wel, whan they have all ydo;
This is to sain, they faillen bothe two.
Yet forgate I to maken rehersaile
Of waters corosif, and of limaile,
And of bodies mollification,
And also of hir induration,
Oiles, ablusions, metal fusible,
To tellen all, wold passen any bible,
That o wher is; wherfore as for the best
Of all thise names now wol I me rest;

For as I trow, I have you told ynow
To reise a fend, al loke he never so row.
A, nay, let be; the philosophres ston,
Elixer cleped, we seken fast eche on,
For had we him, than were we siker ynow;
But unto God of heven I make avow,
For all our craft, whan we han all ydo,
And all our sleight, he wol not come us to.
He hath ymade us spenden mochel good,
For sorwe of which almost we waxen wood,
But that good hope crepeth in our herte,
Supposing ever, though we sore smerte,
To ben releved of him afterward.
Swiche supposing and hope is sharpe and hard.
I warne you wel it is to seken ever.
That future *temps* hath made men dissever,
In trust therof, from all that ever they had,
Yet of that art they conne not waxen sad,
For unto hem it is a bitter swete;
So semeth it; for ne had they but a shete
Which that they might wrappen hem in a-night,
And a bratt to walken in by day-light,
They wold hem sell, and spend it on this craft;
They conne not stinten, til no thing be laft.
And evermore, wher ever that they gon,
Men may hem kennen by smell of brimston;

For all the world they stinken as a gote;
Hir savour is so rammish and so hote,
That though a man a mile from hem be,
The savour wol enfect him, trusteth me.
Lo, thus by smelling and thred-bare array,
If that men list, this folk they knowen may.
And if a man wol axe hem prively,
Why they be clothed so unthriftily,
They right anon wol rounen in his ere,
And saien, if that they espied were,
Men wolde hem slo, because of hir science:
Lo, thus thise folk betraien innocence.
Passe over this, I go my tale unto.
Er that the pot be on the fire ydo
Of metals with a certain quantitee,
My lord hem tempereth, and no man but he;
(Now he is gon, I dare say boldely)
For as men sain, he can don craftily;
Algate I wote wel he hath swiche a name,
And yet ful oft he renneth in a blame;
And wete ye how? ful oft it falleth so,
The pot to-breketh, and farewel all is go.
Thise metales ben of so gret violence,
Our walles may not make hem resistence,
But if they weren wrought of lime and ston;
They percen so, that thurgh the wall they gon;

And som of hem sinke doun into the ground,
(Thus have we lost by times many a pound)
And som are scatered all the flore aboute;
Som lepen into the roof withouten doute.
Though that the fend not in our sight him shewe,
I trow that he be with us, thilke shrewe,
In helle, wher that he is lord and sire,
Ne is ther no more wo, rancour, ne ire.
Whan that our pot is broke, as I have sayde,
Every man chit, and holt him evil apayde.
Som sayd it was long on the fire-making;
Som sayd nay, it was long on the blowing;
(Than was I ferd, for that was min office)
Straw, quod the thridde, ye ben lewed and nice,
It was not tempred as it ought to be.
Nay, quod the fourthe, stint and herken me;
Because our fire was not made of beche,
That is the cause, and other non, so the iche.
I can not tell wheron it was along,
But wel I wot gret strif is us among.
What? quod my lord, ther n'is no more to don,
Of thise perils I wol beware eftsone.
I am right siker, that the pot was crased.
Be as be may, be ye no thing amased.
As usage is, let swepe the flore as swithe;
Plucke up your hertes and be glad and blithe.

The mullok on an hepe ysweped was,
And on the flore ycast a canevas,
And all this mullok in a sive ythrowe,
And sifted, and ypicked many a throwe.
Parde, quod on, somwhat of our metall
Yet is ther here, though that we have not all.
And though this thing mishapped hath as now,
Another time it may be wel ynow.
We mosten put our good in aventure;
A marchant parde may not ay endure,
Trusteth me wel, in his prosperitee:
Somtime his good is drenched in the see,
And somtime cometh it sauf unto the lond.
Pees, quod my lord, the next time I wol fond
To bring our craft all in another plite,
And but I do, sires, let me have the wite:
Ther was defaute in somwhat, wel I wote.
Another sayd, the fire was over hote.
But be it hote or cold, I dare say this,
That we concluden ever more amis:
We faille alway of that which we wold have,
And in our madnesse evermore we rave.
And whan we be together everich on,
Every man semeth a Salomon.
But all thing, which that shineth as the gold,
Ne is no gold, as I have herd it told;

Ne every apple that is faire at eye,
Ne is not good, what so men clap or crie.
Right so, lo, fareth it amonges us.
He that semeth the wisest by Jesus
Is most fool, whan it cometh to the prefe;
And he that semeth trewest, is a thefe.
That shal ye know, or that I from you wende,
By that I of my tale have made an ende.
Ther was a chanon of religioun
Amonges us, wold enfect all a toun,
Though it as gret were as was Ninive,
Rome, Alisaundre, Troie, or other three.
His sleightes and his infinite falsenesse
Ther coude no man writen, as I gesse,
Though that he mighte live a thousand yere;
In all this world of falsenesse n'is his pere.
For in his termes he wol him so winde,
And speke his wordes in so slie a kinde,
Whan he comunen shal with any wight,
That he wol make him doten anon right,
But it a fend be, as himselven is.
Ful many a man hath he begiled er this,
And wol, if that he may live any while:
And yet men gon and riden many a mile
Him for to seke, and have his acquaintance,
Not knowing of his false governance.

And if you lust to yeve me audience,
I wol it tellen here in your presence.
But, worshipful Chanons religious,
Ne demeth not that I sclander your hous,
Although that my tale of a Chanon be.
Of every order som shrew is parde:
And God forbede that all a compagnie
Shuld rewe a singuler mannes folie.
To sclander you is no thing min entent,
But to correcten that is mis I ment.
This tale was not only told for you,
But eke for other mo: ye wote wel how
That among Cristes aposteles twelve
Ther was no traitour but Judas himselve:
Than why shuld al the remenant have blame,
That giltles were? by you I say the same.
Save only this, if ye wol herken me,
If any Judas in your covent be,
Remeveth him betimes, I you rede,
If shame or los may causen any drede.
And be no thing displesed I you pray.
But in this cas herkeneth what I say.

In London was a preest, an annuellere,
That therin dwelled hadde many a yere,
Which was so plesant and so servisable

Unto the wif, ther as he was at table,
That she wold suffer him no thing to pay
For borde ne clothing, went he never so gay;
And spending silver had he right ynow:
Therof no force; I wol proceed as now,
And tellen forth my tale of the Chanon,
That broughte this preest to confusion.
  This false Chanon came upon a day
Unto the preestes chambre, ther he lay,
Beseching him to lene him a certain
Of gold, and he wold quite it him again.
Lene me a marke, quod he, but dayes three,
And at my day I wol it quiten thee.
And if it so be, that thou finde me false,
Another day hang me up by the halse.
  This preest him toke a marke, and that as swith,
And this Chanon him thanked often sith,
And toke his leve, and wente forth his wey:
And at the thridde day brought his money;
And to the preest he toke his gold again,
Wherof this preest was wonder glad and fain.
  Certes, quod he, nothing anoieth me
To lene a man a noble, or two, or three,
Or what thing were in my possession,
Whan he so trewe is of condition,
That in no wise he breken wol his day:

To swiche a man I can never say nay.
What? quod this Chanon, shuld I be untrewe?
Nay, that were thing fallen al of the newe.
Trouth is a thing that I wol ever kepe
Unto the day in which that I shal crepe
Into my grave, and elles God forbede:
Beleveth this as siker as your crede.
God thanke I, and in good time be it sayde,
That ther n'as never man yet evil apayde
For gold ne silver that he to me lent,
Ne never falshede in min herte I ment.
And, sire, (quod he) now of my privetee,
Sin ye so goodlich have ben unto me,
And kithed to me so gret gentillesse,
Somwhat, to quiten with your kindenesse,
I wol you shewe, and if you lust to lere
I wol you techen pleinly the manere,
How I can werken in philosophie.
Taketh good heed, ye shuln wel sen at eye,
That I wol do a maistrie or I go.
Ye? quod the preest, ye, sire, and wol ye so?
Mary therof I pray you hertily.
At your commandement, sire, trewely,
Quod the Chanon, and elles God forbede.
Lo, how this thefe coude his service bede.
Ful soth it is that swiche profered service

Stinketh, as witnessen thise olde wise;
And that ful sone I wol it verifie
In this Chanon, rote of all trecherie,
That evermore delight hath and gladnesse
(Swiche fendly thoughtes in his herte empresse)
How Cristes peple he may to meschief bring.
God kepe us from his false dissimuling.
Nought wiste this preest with whom that he delt,
Ne of his harme coming nothing he felt.
O sely preest, o sely innocent,
With covetise anon thou shalt be blent;
O graceles, ful blind is thy conceite,
For nothing art thou ware of the disceite,
Which that this fox yshapen hath to thee;
His wily wrenches thou ne mayst not flee.
Wherfore to go to the conclusion
That referreth to thy confusion,
Unhappy man, anon I wol me hie
To tellen thin unwit and thy folie,
And eke the falsenesse of that other wretch,
As ferforth as that my conning wol stretch.
  This Chanon was my lord, ye wolden wene;
Sire hoste, in faith, and by the heven quene,
It was another Chanon, and not he,
That can an hundred part more subtiltee.
He hath betraied folkes many a time;

Of his falsenesse it dulleth me to rime.
Ever whan that I speke of his falshede
For shame of him my chekes waxen rede;
Algates they beginnen for to glowe,
For rednesse have I non, right wel I knowe,
In my visage, for fumes diverse
Of metals, which ye have herd me reherse,
Consumed han and wasted my rednesse.
Now take hede of this Chanons cursednesse.
  Sire, quod the Chanon, let your yeman gon
For quiksilver, that we it had anon;
And let him bringen unces two or three;
And whan he cometh, as faste shul ye see
A wonder thing, which ye saw never er this.
  Sire, quod the preest, it shal be don ywis.
He bad his servant fetchen him this thing,
And he al redy was at his bidding,
And went him forth, and came anon again
With this quiksilver, shortly for to sain,
And toke thise unces three to the Chanoun;
And he hem laide wel and faire adoun,
And bad the servant coles for to bring,
That he anon might go to his werking.
  The coles right anon weren yfet,
And this Chanon toke out a crosselet
Of his bosome, and shewed it to the preest.

This instrument, quod he, which that thou seest,
Take in thyn hond, and put thyself therin
Of this quiksilver an unce, and here begin
In the name of Crist to wex a philosophre.
Ther be ful fewe, which that I wolde profre
To shewen hem thus muche of my science:
For here shul ye see by experience,
That this quiksilver I wol mortifie,
Right in your sight anon withouten lie,
And make it as good silver and as fine,
As ther is any in your purse or mine,
Or elles wher; and make it malliable;
And elles holdeth me false and unable
Amonges folk for ever to appere.
I have a pouder here that cost me dere,
Shal make all good, for it is cause of all
My conning, which that I you shewen shall.
Voideth your man, and let him be therout;
And shet the dore, while we ben about
Our privetee, that no man us espie,
While that we werke in this philosophie.
All, as he bade, fulfilled was in dede.
This ilke servant anon right out yede,
And his maister shette the dore anon,
And to hir labour spedily they gon.
This preest at this cursed Chanons bidding,

Upon the fire anon he set this thing,
And blew the fire, and besied him ful fast.
And this Chanon into the crosselet cast
A pouder, n'ot I never wherof it was
Ymade, other of chalk, other of glas,
Or somwhat elles, was not worth a flie,
To blinden with this preest; and bade him hie
The coles for to couchen all above
The crosselet; for in tokening I thee love
(Quod this Chanon) thine owen hondes two
Shal werken all thing which that here is do.
Grand mercy, quod the preest, and was ful glad,
And couched the coles as the Chanon bad.
And while he besy was, this fendly wretch,
This false Chanon (the foule fend him fetch)
Out of his bosom toke a bechen cole,
In which ful subtilly was made an hole,
And therin put was of silver limaile
An unce, and stopped was withouten faile
The hole with wax, to kepe the limaile in.
And understandeth, that this false gin
Was not made ther, but it was made before;
And other thinges I shal tell you more
Hereafterward, which that he with him brought;
Er he came ther, him to begile he thought,
And so he did, or that they went atwin:

Til he had torned him, coud he not blin.
It dulleth me, whan that I of him speke;
On his falshede fain wold I me awreke,
If I wist how, but he is here and ther,
He is so variaunt, he abit no wher.
But taketh hede, sires, now for Goddes love.
He toke his cole, of which I spake above,
And in his hond he bare it prively,
And whiles the preest couched besily
The coles, as I tolde you er this,
This Chanon sayde; frend, ye don amis;
This is not couched as it ought to be,
But sone I shal amenden it, quod he.
Now let me meddle therwith but a while,
For of you have I pitee by Seint Gile.
Ye ben right hot, I see wel how ye swete;
Have here a cloth and wipe away the wete.
And whiles that the preest wiped his face,
This Chanon toke his cole, with sory grace,
And laied it above on the midward
Of the crosselet, and blew wel afterward,
Til that the coles gonnen fast to bren.
Now yeve us drinke, quod this Chanon then,
As swithe all shal be wel, I undertake.
Sitte we doun, and let us mery make.
And whanne that this Chanones bechen cole

Was brent, all the limaile out of the hole
Into the crosselet anon fell adoun;
And so it muste nedes by resoun,
Sin it above so even couched was;
But therof wist the preest nothing, alas!
He demed all the coles ylike good,
For of the sleight he nothing understood.
And whan this Alkymistre saw his time,
Riseth up, sire preest, quod he, and stondeth by me;
And for I wote wel ingot have ye non,
Goth, walketh forth, and bringeth a chalk ston;
For I wol make it of the same shap,
That is an ingot, if I may have hap.
Bring eke with you a bolle or elles a panne
Ful of water, and ye shul wel see thanne
How that our besinesse shal thrive and preve.
And yet, for ye shul have no misbeleve
Ne wrong conceit of me in your absence,
I ne wol not ben out of your presence,
But gò with you, and come with you again.
The chambre dore, shortly for to sain,
They opened and shet, and went hir wey,
And forth with hem they caried the key,
And camen again withouten any delay.
What shuld I tarien all the longe day?
He toke the chalk, and shope it in the wise

Of an ingot, as I shal you devise;
I say, he toke out of his owen sleve
A teine of silver (yvel mote he cheve)
Which that ne was but a just unce of weight.
And taketh heed now of his cursed sleight;
He shop his ingot, in length and in brede
Of thilke teine, withouten any drede,
So slily, that the preest it not espide;
And in his sleve again he gan it hide;
And from the fire he toke up his matere,
And in the ingot it put with mery chere:
And in the water-vessel he it cast,
Whan that him list, and bad the preest as fast,
Loke what ther is; put in thin hond and grope;
Thou shalt ther finden silver as I hope.
What, divel of helle! shuld it elles be?
Shaving of silver, silver is parde.
He put his hond in, and toke up a teine
Of silver fine, and glad in every veine
Was this preest, whan he saw that it was so.
Goddes blessing, and his mothers also,
And alle Halwes, have ye, sire Chanon,
Sayde this preest, and I hir malison,
But, and ye vouchesauf to techen me
This noble craft and this subtilitee,
I wol be your in all that ever I may.

Quod the Chanon, yet wol I make assay
The second time, that ye mow taken hede,
And ben expert of this, and in your nede
Another day assay in min absence
This discipline, and this crafty science.
Let take another unce, quod he tho,
Of quiksilver, withouten wordes mo,
And do therwith as ye have don er this
With that other, which that now silver is.
The preest him besieth all that ever he can
To don as this Chanon, this cursed man,
Commandeth him, and faste blewe the fire,
For to come to the effect of his desire.
And this Chanon right in the mene while
Al redy was this preest eft to begile,
And for a countenance in his hond bare
An holow stikke, (take kepe and beware)
In the ende of which an unce and no more
Of silver limaile put was, as before
Was in his cole, and stopped with wax wel
For to kepe in his limaile every del.
And while this preest was in his besinesse,
This Chanon with his stikke gan him dresse
To him anon, and his pouder cast in,
As he did erst, (the devil out of his skin
Him torne, I pray to God, for his falshede,

For he was ever false in thought and dede)
And with his stikke, above the crosselet,
That was ordained with that false get,
He stirreth the coles, til relenten gan
The wax again the fire, as every man,
But he a fool be, wote wel it mote nede.
And all that in the stikke was out yede,
And in the crosselet hastily it fell.
Now, goode sires, what wol ye bet than wel?
Whan that this preest was thus begiled again,
Supposing nought but trouthe, soth to sain,
He was so glad, that I can not expresse
In no manere his mirth and his gladnesse,
And to the Chanon he profered eftsone
Body and good: ye, quod the Chanon, sone,
Though poure I be, crafty thou shalt me finde:
I warne thee wel, yet is ther more behinde.
Is ther any coper here within? sayd he.
Ye, sire, quod the preest, I trow ther be.
Elles go beie us som, and that as swithe.
Now, goode sire, go forth thy way and hie the.
He went his way, and with the coper he came,
And this Chanon it in his hondes name,
And of that coper weyed out an unce.
To simple is my tonge to pronounce,
As minister of my wit, the doublenesse

Of this Chanon, rote of all cursednesse.
He semed frendly, to hem that knew him nought,
But he was fendly both in werk and thought.
It werieth me to tell of his falsenesse;
And natheles yet wol I it expresse,
To that entent men may beware therby,
And for non other cause trewely.
He put this coper into the crosselet,
And on the fire as swithe he hath it set,
And cast in pouder, and made the preest to blow,
And in his werking for to stoupen low,
As he did erst, and all n'as but a jape;
Right as him list the preest he made his ape.
And afterward in the ingot he it cast,
And in the panne put it at the last
Of water, and in he put his owen hond;
And in his sleve, as ye beforen hond
Herde me tell, he had a silver teine;
He slily toke it out, this cursed heine,
(Unweting this preest of his false craft)
And in the pannes botome he it laft.
And in the water rombleth to and fro,
And wonder prively toke up also
The coper teine, (not knowing thilke preest)
And hid it, and him hente by the brest,
And to him spake, and thus said in his game;

Stoupeth adoun; by God ye be to blame;
Helpeth me now, as I did you whilere;
Put in your hond, and loketh what is there.
This preest toke up this silver teine anon;
And thanne said the Chanon, let us gon
With thise three teines which that we han wrought,
To som goldsmith, and wete if they ben ought:
For by my faith I n'olde for my hood
But if they weren silver fine and good,
And that as swithe wel preved shal it be.
Unto the goldsmith with thise teines three
They went anon, and put hem in assay
To fire and hammer: might no man say nay,
But that they weren as hem ought to be.
This soted preest, who was gladder than he?
Was never brid gladder agains the day,
Ne nightingale in the seson of May
Was never non, that list better to sing,
Ne lady lustier in carolling,
Or for to speke of love and womanhede,
Ne knight in armes don a hardy dede
To stonden in grace of his lady dere,
Than hadde this preest this craft for to lere;
And to the Chanon thus he spake and seid;
For the love of God, that for us alle deid,
And as I may deserve it unto you,

What shal this receit cost? telleth me now.
  By our lady, quod this Chanon, it is dere.
I warne you wel, that, save I and a frere,
In Englelond ther can no man it make.
  No force, quod he; now, sire, for Goddes sake,
What shall I pay? telleth me, I you pray.
  Ywis, quod he, it is ful dere I say.
Sire, at o word, if that you list it have,
Ye shal pay fourty pound, so God me save;
And n'ere the frendship that ye did er this
To me, ye shulden payen more ywis.
  This preest the sum of fourty pound anon
Of nobles fet, and toke hem everich on
To this Chanon, for this ilke receit.
All his werking n'as but fraud and deceit.
  Sire preest, he said, I kepe for to have no loos
Of my craft, for I wold it were kept cloos;
And as ye love me, kepeth it secree:
For if men knewen all my subtiltee,
By God they wolden have so gret envie
To me, because of my philosophie,
I shuld be ded, ther were non other way.
  God it forbede, quod the preest, what ye say.
Yet had I lever spenden all the good
Which that I have, (and elles were I wood)
Than that ye shuld fallen in swiche meschefe.

For your good will, sire, have ye right good pref,
Quod the Chanon, and farewel, *grand mercy*.
He went his way, and never the preest him sey
After that day: and whan that this preest shold
Maken assay, at swiche time as he wold,
Of this receit, farewel, it n'olde not be.
Lo, thus bejaped and begiled was he:
Thus maketh he his introduction
To bringen folk to hir destruction.

Considereth, sires, how that in eche estat
Betwixen men and gold ther is debat,
So ferforth that unnethes is ther non.
This multiplying so blint many on,
That in good faith I trowe that it be
The cause gretest of swiche scarsitee.
Thise philosophres speke so mistily
In this craft, that men cannot come therby,
For any wit that men have now adayes.
They mow wel chäteren, as don thise jayes,
And in hir termes set hir lust and peine,
But to hir purpos shul they never atteine.
A man may lightly lerne, if he have ought,
To multiplie, and bring his good to nought.
Lo, swiche a lucre is in this lusty game;
A mannes mirth it wol turne al to grame,
And emptien also gret and hevy purses,

And maken folk for to purchasen curses
Of hem, that han therto hir good ylent.
O, fy for shame, they that han be brent,
Alas! can they not flee the fires hete?
Ye that it use, I rede that ye it lete,
Lest ye lese all; for bet than never is late:
Never to thriven, were to long a date.
Though ye prolle ay, ye shul it never find:
Ye ben as bold as is Bayard the blind,
That blondereth forth, and peril casteth non:
He is as bold to renne agains a ston,
As for to go besides in the way:
So faren ye that multiplien, I say.
If that your eyen cannot seen aright,
Loketh that youre mind lacke not his sight.
For though ye loke never so brode and stare,
Ye shul not win a mite on that chaffare,
But wasten all that ye may rape and renne.
Withdraw the fire, lest it to faste brenne;
Medleth no more with that art, I mene;
For if ye don, your thrift is gon ful clene.
And right as swithe I wol you tellen here
What philosophres sain in this matere.
  Lo, thus saith Arnolde of the newe toun,
As his Rosarie maketh mentioun,
He saith right thus, withouten any lie;

Ther may no man Mercurie mortifie,
But it be with his brothers knowleching.
Lo, how that he, which firste said this thing,
Of philosophres father was Hermes:
He saith, how that the dragon douteles
Ne dieth not, but if that he be slain
With his brother. And this is for to sain,
By the dragon Mercury, and non other,
He understood, and brimstone by his brother,
That out of Sol and Luna were ydrawe.
And therfore, said he, take heed to my sawe.
Let no man besie him this art to séche,
But if that he the entention and speche
Of philosophres understonden can;
And if he do, he is a lewed man.
For this science and this conning (quod he)
Is of the secree of secrees parde.
Also ther was a disciple of Plato,
That on a time said his maister to,
As his book Senior wol bere witnesse,
And this was his demand in sothfastnesse:
Telle me the name of thilke privee ston.
And Plato answerd unto him anon;
Take the ston that Titanos men name.
Which is that? quod he. Magnetia is the same,
Saide Plato. Ye, sire, and is it thus?

This is *ignotum per ignotius.*
What is Magnetia, good sire, I pray?
It is a water that is made, I say,
Of the elementes foure, quod Plato.
Tell me the rote, good sire, quod he tho,
Of that water, if that it be your will.
Nay, nay, quod Plato, certain that I n'ill.
The philosophres were sworne everich on,
That they ne shuld discover it unto non,
Ne in no book it write in no manere;
For unto God it is so lefe and dere,
That he wol not that it discovered be,
But wher it liketh to his deitee
Man for to enspire, and eke for to defende
Whom that him liketh; lo, this is the ende.
Than thus conclude I, sin that God of heven,
Ne wol not that the philosophres neven,
How that a man shal come unto this ston,
I rede as for the best to let it gon.
For who so maketh God his adversary,
As for to werken any thing in contrary
Of his will, certes never shal he thrive,
Though that he multiply terme of his live.
And ther a point; for ended is my tale.
God send every good man bote of his bale.

THE MANCIPLES PROLOGUE.

WETE ye not wher stondeth a litel toun,
Which that ycleped is Bob up and doun,
Under the Blee, in Canterbury way?
Ther gan our hoste to jape and to play,
And sayde; sires, what? Dun is in the mire.
Is ther no man for praiere ne for hire,
That wol awaken our felaw behind?
A thefe him might ful lightly rob and bind.
See how he nappeth, see, for cockes bones,
As he wold fallen from his hors atones.
Is that a coke of London, with meschance?
Do him come forth, he knoweth his penance;
For he shal tell a tale by my fey,
Although it be not worth a botel hey.
Awake thou coke, quod he, God yeve thee sorwe,
What aileth thee to slepen by the morwe?
Hast thou had fleen al night, or art thou dronke?
Or hast thou with som quene al night yswonke,
So that thou mayst not holden up thin hed?
This coke, that was ful pale and nothing red,
Sayd to our hoste; so God my soule blesse,
As ther is falle on me swiche hevinesse,
N'ot I nat why, that me were lever to slepe,
Than the best gallon wine that is in Chepe.

Wel, quod the Manciple, if it may don ese
To thee, sire Coke, and to no wight displese,
Which that here rideth in this compagnie,
And that our hoste wol of his curtesie,
I wol as now excuse thee of thy tale;
For in good faith thy visage is ful pale:
Thin eyen dasen, sothly as me thinketh,
And wel I wot, thy breth ful soure stinketh,
That sheweth wel thou art not wel disposed:
Of me certain thou shalt not ben yglosed.
See how he galpeth, lo, this dronken wight,
As though he wold us swalow anon right.
Hold close thy mouth, man, by thy father kin:
The devil of helle set his foot therin!
Thy cursed breth enfecten woll us alle:
Fy stinking swine, fy, foul mote thee befalle.
A, taketh heed, sires, of this lusty man.
Now, swete sire, wol ye just at the fan?
Therto, me thinketh, ye be wel yshape.
I trow that ye have dronken win of ape,
And that is whan men playen with a straw.
And with this speche the coke waxed all wraw,
And on the Manciple he gan nod fast
For lacke of speche; and doun his hors him cast,
Wher as he lay, til that men him up toke.
This was a faire chivachee of a coke:
Alas that he ne had hold him by his ladel!

And er that he agen were in the sadel,
Ther was gret shoving bothe to and fro
To lift him up, and mochel care and wo,
So unweldy was this sely palled gost:
And to the Manciple than spake our host.
  Because that drinke hath domination
Upon this man, by my salvation
I trow he lewedly wol tell his tale.
For were it win, or old or moisty ale,
That he hath dronke, he speketh in his nose,
And sneseth fast, and eke he hath the pose.
He also hath to don more than ynough
To kepe him on his capel out of the slough:
And if he falle from of his capel eftsone,
Than shul we alle have ynough to done
In lifting up his hevy dronken cors.
Tell on thy tale, of him make I no force.
  But yet, Manciple, in faith thou art to nice,
Thus openly to repreve him of his vice:
Another day he wol paraventure
Recleimen thee, and bring thee to the lure:
I mene, he speken wol of smale thinges,
As for to pinchen at thy rekeninges,
That were not honest, if it came to prefe.
  Quod the Manciple, that were a gret meschefe:
So might he lightly bring me in the snare.
Yet had I lever payen for the mare,

Which he rit on, than he shuld with me strive.
I wol not wrathen him, so mote I thrive;
That that I spake, I sayd it in my bourd.
And wete ye what? I have here in my gourd
A draught of win, ye of a ripe grape,
And right anon ye shul seen a good jape.
This coke shal drinke therof, if that I may;
Up peine of my lif he wol not say nay.
And certainly, to tellen as it was,
Of this vessell the coke dranke fast, (alas!
What nedeth it? he dranke ynough beforne)
And whan he hadde pouped in his horne,
To the Manciple he toke the gourd again.
And of that drinke the coke was wonder fain,
And thonked him in swiche wise as he coude.
Than gan our hoste to laughen wonder loude,
And sayd; I see wel it is necessary
Wher that we gon good drinke with us to cary;
For that wol turnen rancour and disese
To accord and love, and many a wrong apese.
O Bacchus, Bacchus, blessed be thy name,
That so canst turnen ernest into game;
Worship and thonke be to thy deitee.
Of that matere ye get no more of me.
Tell on thy tale, Manciple, I thee pray.
Wel, sire, quod he, now herkeneth what I say.

THE MANCIPLES TALE.

WHAN Phebus dwelled here in erth adoun,
As olde bookes maken mentioun,
He was the moste lusty bacheler
Of all this world, and eke the best archer.
He slow Phiton the serpent, as he lay
Sleping agains the sonne upon a day;
And many another noble worthy dede
He with his bow wrought, as men mowen rede.
Playen he coude on every minstralcie,
And singen, that it was a melodie
To heren of his clere vois the soun.
Certes the king of Thebes, Amphioun,
That with his singing walled the citee,
Coud never singen half so wel as he.
Therto he was the semelieste man,
That is or was, sithen the world began;
What nedeth it his feture to descrive?
For in this world, n'is non so faire on live.
He was therwith fulfilled of gentillesse,
Of honour, and of parfite worthinesse.
This Phebus, that was flour of bachelerie,
As wel in fredom, as in chivalrie,
For his disport, in signe eke of victorie
Of Phiton, so as telleth us the storie,

Was wont to beren in his hond a bowe.
Now had this Phebus in his hous a crowe,
Which in a cage he fostred many a day,
And taught it speken, as men teche a jay.
Whit was this crowe, as is a snow-whit swan,
And contrefete the speche of every man
He coude, whan he shulde tell a tale.
Therwith in all this world no nightingale
Ne coude by an hundred thousand del
Singen so wonder merily and wel.
Now had this Phebus in his hous a wif,
Which that he loved more than his lif,
And night and day did ever his diligence
Hire for to plese, and don hire reverence:
Save only, if that I the soth shal sain,
Jelous he was, and wold have kept hire fain,
For him were loth yjaped for to be;
And so is every wight in swiche degree;
But all for nought, for it availeth nought.
A good wif, that is clene of werk and thought,
Shuld not be kept in non await certain:
And trewely the labour is in vain
To kepe a shrewe, for it wol not be.
This hold I for a veray nicetee,
To spillen labour for to kepen wives;
Thus writen olde clerkes in hir lives.
But now to purpos, as I first began.

This worthy Phebus doth all that he can
To plesen hire, wening thurgh swiche plesance,
And for his manhood and his governance,
That no man shulde put him from hire grace:
But God it wote, ther may no man embrace
As to distreine a thing, which that nature
Hath naturelly set in a creature.

Take any brid, and put it in a cage,
And do all thin entente, and thy corage,
To foster it tendrely with mete and drinke
Of alle deintees that thou canst bethinke,
And kepe it al so clenely as thou may;
Although the cage of gold be never so gay,
Yet had this brid, by twenty thousand fold,
Lever in a forest, that is wilde and cold,
Gon eten wormes, and swiche wretchednesse.
For ever this brid will don his besinesse
To escape out of his cage whan that he may:
His libertee the brid desireth ay.

Let take a cat, and foster hire with milke
And tendre flesh, and make hire couche of silke,
And let hire see a mous go by the wall,
Anon she weiveth milke and flesh, and all,
And every deintee that is in that hous,
Swiche appetit hath she to ete the mous.
Lo, here hath kind hire domination,
And appetit flemeth discretion.

A she-wolf hath also a vilains kind;
The lewedeste wolf that she may find,
Or lest of reputation, wol she take
In time whan hire lust to have a make.
All thise ensamples speke I by thise men
That ben untrewe, and nothing by women.
For men have ever a likerous appetit
On lower thing to parforme hir delit
Than on hir wives, be they never so faire,
Ne never so trewe, ne so debonaire.
Flesh is so newefangle, with meschance,
That we ne con in nothing have plesance,
That souneth unto vertue any while.
This Phebus, which that thought upon no gile,
Disceived was for all his jolitee:
For under him another hadde she,
A man of litel reputation,
Nought worth to Phebus in comparison:
The more harme is; it happeth often so;
Of which ther cometh mochel harme and wo.
And so befell, whan Phebus was absent,
His wif anon hath for hire lemman sent.
Hire lemman? certes that is a knavish speche.
Foryeve it me, and that I you beseche.
The wise Plato sayth, as ye mow rede,
The word must nede accorden with the dede,
If men shul tellen proprely a thing,

The word must cosin be to the werking.
I am a boistous man, right thus say I;
Ther is no difference trewely
Betwix a wif that is of high degree,
(If of hire body dishonest she be)
And any poure wenche, other than this,
(If it so be they werken both amis)
But, for the gentil is in estat above,
She shal be cleped his lady and his love;
And, for that other is a poure woman,
She shal be cleped his wenche and his lemman:
And God it wote, min owen dere brother,
Men lay as low that on as lith that other.
  Right so betwix a titleles tiraunt
And an outlawe, or elles a thefe erraunt,
The same I say, ther is no difference,
(To Alexander told was this sentence)
But, for the tyrant is of greter might
By force of meinie for to sle doun right,
And brennen hous and home, and make all plain,
Lo, therfore is he cleped a capitain;
And, for the outlawe hath but smale meinie,
And may not do so gret an harme as he,
Ne bring a contree to so gret meschiefe,
Men clepen him an outlawe or a thefe.
  But, for I am a man not textuel,
I wol not tell of textes never a del;

I wol go to my tale, as I began.
Whan Phebus wif had sent for hire lemman,
Anon they wroughten all hir lust volage.
This white crowe, that heng ay in the cage,
Beheld hir werke, and sayde never a word:
And whan that home was come Phebus the lord,
This crowe song, cuckow, cuckow, cuckow.
What? brid, quod Phebus, what song singest thou now?
Ne were thou wont so merily to sing,
That to my herte it was a rejoysing
To here thy vois? alas! what song is this?
By God, quod he, I singe not amis.
Phebus, (quod he) for all thy worthinesse,
For all thy beautee, and all thy gentillesse,
For all thy song, and all thy minstralcie,
For all thy waiting, blered is thin eye,
With on of litel reputation,
Not worth to thee as in comparison
The mountance of a gnat, so mote I thrive;
For on thy bedde thy wif I saw him swive.
What wol you more? the crowe anon him told,
By sade tokenes, and by wordes bold,
How that his wif had don hire lecherie
Him to gret shame, and to gret vilanie;
And told him oft, he sawe it with his eyen.
This Phebus gan awayward for to wrien;

Him thought his woful herte brast atwo.
His bowe he bent, and set therin a flo;
And in his ire he hath his wif yslain;
This is the effect, ther is no more to sain.
For sorwe of which he brake his minstralcie,
Both harpe and lute, giterne, and sautrie;
And eke he brake his arwes, and his bowe;
And after that thus spake he to the crowe.
Traitour, quod he, with tonge of scorpion,
Thou hast me brought to my confusion:
Alas that I was wrought! why n'ere I dede?
O dere wif, o gemme of lustyhede,
That were to me so sade, and eke so trewe,
Now liest thou ded, with face pale of hewe,
Ful gilteles, that durst I swere ywis.
O rakel hond, to do so foule a mis.
O troubled wit, o ire reccheles,
That unavised smitest gilteles.
O wantrust, ful of false suspecion,
Wher was thy wit and thy discretion?
O, every man beware of rakelnesse,
Ne trowe no thing withouten strong witnesse.
Smite not to sone, er that ye weten why,
And beth avised wel and sikerly,
Or ye do any execution
Upon your ire for suspecion.
Alas! a thousand folk hath rakel ire

Fully fordon, and brought hem in the mire.
Alas! for sorwe I wol myselven sle.
And to the crowe, o false thefe, said he,
I wol thee quite anon thy false tale.
Thou song whilom, like any nightingale,
Now shalt thou, false thefe, thy song forgon,
And eke thy white fethers everich on,
Ne never in all thy lif ne shalt thou speke;
Thus shul men on a traitour ben awreke.
Thou and thin ofspring ever shul be blake,
Ne never swete noise shul ye make,
But ever crie ageins tempest and rain,
In token, that thurgh thee my wif is slain.
And to the crowe he stert, and that anon,
And pulled his white fethers everich on,
And made him blak, and raft him all his song
And eke his speche, and out at dore him flong
Unto the devil, which I him betake;
And for this cause ben alle crowes blake.
Lordings, by this ensample, I you pray,
Beth ware, and taketh kepe what that ye say;
Ne telleth never man in all your lif,
How that another man hath dight his wif;
He wol you haten mortally certain.
Dan Salomon, as wise clerkes sain,
Techeth a man to kepe his tonge wel;
But as I sayd, I am not textuel.

But natheles thus taughte me my dame;
My sone, thinke on the crowe a Goddes name.
My sone, kepe wel thy tonge, and kepe thy frend;
A wicked tonge is werse than a fend:
My sone, from a fende men may hem blesse.
My sone, God of his endeles goodnesse
Walled a tonge with teeth, and lippes eke,
For man shuld him avisen what he speke.
My sone, ful often for to mochel speche
Hath many a man ben spilt, as clerkes teche;
But for a litel speche avisedly
Is no man shent, to speken generally.
My sone, thy tonge shuldest thou restreine
At alle time, but whan thou dost thy peine
To speke of God in honour and prayere.
The firste vertue, sone, if thou wolt lere,
Is to restreine, and kepen wel thy tonge;
Thus leren children, whan that they be yonge.
My sone, of mochel speking evil avised,
Ther lesse speking had ynough suffised,
Cometh mochel harme; thus was me told and taught;
In mochel speche sinne wanteth naught.
Wost thou wherof a rakel tonge serveth?
Right as a swerd forcutteth and forkerveth
An arme atwo, my dere sone, right so
A tonge cutteth frendship all atwo.
A jangler is to God abhominable.

Rede Salomon, so wise and honourable,
Rede David in his Psalmes, rede Senek.
My sone, speke not, but with thyn hed thou beck,
Dissimule as thou were defe, if that thou here
A janglour speke of perilous matere.
The Fleming sayth, and lerne if that thee lest,
That litel jangling causeth mochel rest.
My sone, if thou no wicked word hast said,
Thee thar not dreden for to be bewraid;
But he that hath missayd, I dare wel sain,
He may by no way clepe his word again.
Thing that is sayd is sayd, and forth it goth,
Though him repent, or be him never so loth,
He is his thral, to whom that he hath sayd
A tale, of which he is now evil apaid.
My sone, beware, and be non auctour newe
Of tidings, whether they ben false or trewe;
Wher so thou come, amonges high or lowe,
Kepe wel thy tonge, and thinke upon the crowe.

END OF VOL. III.

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